

THE



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HENRY JAMES: THE FIRST PHASE

BY VAN WYCK BROOKS

ON a certain morning in the year 1849, the philosopher Emerson received from a peripatetic friend a letter containing these oddly heretical words: "Considering with much pity our four stout boys, who have no playroom within doors and import shocking bad manners from the street, we gravely ponder whether it wouldn't be better to go abroad for a few years with them, allowing them to absorb French and German, and get such a sensuous education as they cannot get here." Heretical I say these words were, more truly heretical in a sense than any of Emerson's own, for they seemed to contradict the assumptions of the American religion of democracy. One asks oneself what Emerson must have thought as he read them. Perhaps it crossed his mind that if, to a fellow-American, a fellow-philosopher, the out-of-door world had ceased to be a school of manners and a "sensuous education" had become the chief desideratum for one's offspring, it must mean that the first phase of the great American experiment was approaching its end.

The letter could not have been written by a New Englander—its savour was too worldly. Besides, the New England out-of-doors had still its old bucolic innocence: even in Boston, the Boston of 1849, the "street" could have given the fond parent little cause for alarm. And what New Englander of the heroic age would have desired for his sons an education primarily sensuous? In fact, the writer, philosopher that he was notwithstanding, lived, or rather lodged, in New York: he had in his veins no drop of New England blood and had never set foot in New England till

he was nearly thirty-five years old. This singular heretic—it was Henry James the Elder—was of Irish descent on both sides. Moreover, and as if to seal the disparity between himself and the illuminati of Boston, the comrades of his youth had included at least one actor, and there was a family legend that he had been for a period “quite definitely wild.”

This letter, or rather the purpose which it expressed, was to have its consequences in American history, for the William as well as the Henry James of the succeeding generation was largely a product of that sensuous education in the Old World. On the other hand, both were largely products of their father. If the elder James had not possessed the peculiar temperament and interests that set him apart from his contemporaries, if he had not inherited a considerable fortune, if, finally, he had not been the victim of an accident in his youth that had resulted in the amputation of one of his legs, the philosophy of his elder and the art of his second son would certainly have been quite different. Having lost this leg, he could live conveniently, as his grandson says, “only in towns where smooth footways and ample facilities for transportation were to be had.” It was thus predestined that, in an age when the rustic life was the characteristic American life, his children should pass their infancy on the high roads of the great world.

He was, this man, this witty and devoted, this inveterately urban sage, a figure to the highest degree paradoxical. The son of a Presbyterian merchant in Albany, whose wealth is said to have been greater than that of any other citizen of the State save John Jacob Astor, he had studied for the ministry and remained, though he never took orders, a theologian by vocation. In his youth, while travelling in England—he was suffering at the time from a nervous disorder—he had become acquainted with the writings of Swedenborg. It was a mystical experience, and it had fixed in him the belief, which his elder son seems to have inherited, that a true enlargement of the spirit is possible only to those who have known sickness, to which he added ostracism and opposition. It was then that he dedicated himself to the formulation of a theology that should express his profound and multiple intuitions. “He applied himself,” wrote one of his sons, “with a regularity and a piety as little subject to sighing abatements or betrayed

fears as if he had been working under pressure for his bread and ours and the question were too urgent for his daring to doubt." And this although his books, published at his own expense, were received from first to last in "blank silence."

No one but his elder son, who edited his *Literary Remains*, has attempted to elucidate what in his own family were known as "Father's Ideas." To us, at least, they must remain flights of the alone to the alone; yet William James expressed what all must feel when he said that his father's style, "to its great dignity of cadence and full and homely vocabulary, united a sort of inward palpitating human quality, gracious and tender, precise, fierce, scornful, humorous by turns, recalling the rich vascular temperament of the old English masters, rather than that of an American of today." The style, in fact, suggests the complexity of the man. Theologian that he was, he had no more sympathy with the moralistic than with the commercial preoccupations of the majority of his countrymen: he had never been able to forget the rigours of his Albany childhood. He delighted in giving the Sabbath a "black eye"; his greatest horror was what he called "flagrant morality," and he said that he would rather have a son of his "corroded with all the sins of the Decalogue than have him perfect." From which we can see that he was in full rebellion against the idols of the tribe.

This singular man was, therefore, in a somewhat trying position. Had he been born a New Englander, had he been shaped by the influences of New England, he might well have become a sort of supplementary Emerson or Thoreau; he might have been able to participate, that is, in the intellectual movement of his age. In this case he would undoubtedly have been reconciled to an American destiny. "An expansive expanding companion," as Emerson called him, who "would remove to Boston to attend a good club a single night," he was framed for society as others are framed for solitude and would certainly have been a happier man if his social and his intellectual interests had been able to run side by side. In the end he retired to Boston, he settled in Cambridge, he became an ornament of the Saturday Club; and New York knew him no more. As a mystical democrat, a constitutional optimist, a Fourierist of a sort—overflowing, as one of his sons remarks, with a "brave contradiction or opposition be-

tween all his parts, a thing which made for perfect variety"—he had indeed much in common with the Transcendentalist brotherhood. Much, but not enough. He could observe that "once we get rid of slavery the new heavens and new earth will swim into reality"; but there he stopped. The truth is that his material resources, his knowledge of the world, his metropolitan view of life had bred in him, along with his theological preoccupations, a sceptical and mundane habit of mind. He had been "wild" and had not repented; he had been the friend of an actor and had not regretted it. New York, in a word, for all its flimsiness and its commerciality, had spoiled him for a more provincial atmosphere: New York was not intellectual, but it was, after all, an outpost of the great world. His elder son speaks of the reckless humour of his conversation and of his "abasing mood" as having "often startled the good people of Boston." He could not take New England seriously.

It was unfortunate. Had anything so irregular, indeed, ever been seen before? This eccentric American was at once too Bostonian for New York and too much of a New Yorker for Boston: he was, moreover, a born controversialist, he loved an argument, he batted on opposition—and where had he been able to find an adversary? In a day of rampant isms, not a soul had listened to *his* particular gospel; he had toiled away in the most awkward of solitudes, and it was not sympathy that he longed for, it was resistance. Resistance! If only the blank wall had returned an echo! If only the blank wall had been *firm*! He had gifts, powers, potentialities: how could he ever discover *what* he had? But America had spoken no word, and he had pushed at the blank wall and found that it was soft; and the bewildered sage, wondering and aggrieved, asked himself whether in Europe his case might not have been different. For Europe he had, on other accounts, a sufficient affection: he loved the colour and the romance of life, music, pictures, the past, the ways of the world. Who could tell? Perhaps Europe, which contained everything, might even provide him with a forum. England, for instance. It was in England that he had received the revelation of Swedenborg; he had even formed there in his youth an acquaintance with Carlyle. Possibly, if he returned, he might, in that livelier air, find himself not only welcomed, but embraced, not only embraced, but called

out: there were antagonists in England who were worthy of his wit. . . . Such were the fond hopes that possessed him.

The pathos of it was that our anxious philosopher could not, for all his longings, rejoin the European procession. If, in the New World, he dreamed of the Old, he no sooner set foot in Europe than all his American predilections rose up in him. He was the victim of a species of atavism that is common in the younger countries when men, relieved from material pressure, become aware of ancestral instincts that have retained the stamp of their original environment. But the intervening generations had stamped him also: he was American, incorrigibly American, American for good and all. From England he writes home that all the men he meets are "despoiled of their rich individual manliness by the necessity of providing for these imbecile old inheritances of Church and State." "I shouldn't wonder," he observes, "if Barnum grew regenerate in some far-off day by mere force of his democracy." And as for the intellectual life which he had so idealized—alas, how could he have so befooled himself! There was Carlyle, for instance, "Mother Eve's own darling cantankerous Thomas," the greatest man of them all, Carlyle, with his "rococo airs and affectations, his antiquated strut and heroics": Carlyle was simply a "literary desperado." . . . In short, our wistful pilgrim was utterly disabused, disabused and piqued; for it is also true that as a seeker of the English felicity he had experienced, as the younger Henry James remarks, nothing but "the sense of playing his mature and ardent thought over great dense constituted presences and opaque surfaces that could by their very nature scarce give back so much as a shudder." . . . It was all impossible. . . . And yet, and yet . . . He could not surrender the beloved vision. He would walk up and down in his room at the hotel, "talking," as William James describes him, "of the superiority of America to these countries after all, and how much better it is we should have done with them." But the moment he stepped off the ship the illusion seized him once more. The Old World, was it not a paradise, of which, in the end, by some miracle, the gates might open to receive him? . . . Thus he lived with his eye ever turned across the sea.

Such is the figure who drifts in and out of his second son's reminiscences; such was the man whose temperament, impulses,

and preoccupations determined so largely the character and condition of the James family. No doubt Henry James had his father's example in mind when, as he remarks in his life of W. W. Story, he "contrasted the luxury of the European 'career' with the mere snatched dignity of the American." A high talent wasting itself upon the desert air: this was the most poignant spectacle that hung before his eyes during the whole of his adolescence. It would all have been so different beyond the Atlantic! Europe was the land where great men came into their own; Europe was indeed the Jerusalem of all delights. Could anything have been more obvious to a little boy? It was an axiom, an axiom by the nature of the case. "Had *all* their talk," the novelist says of his parents, "had *all* their talk for its subject, in my infant ears, that happy time?"—the time of their first visit to England. "Did it deal only with London and Piccadilly and the Green Park?" And again: "I saw my parents homesick, as I conceived, for the ancient order and distressed and inconvenienced by many of the more immediate features of the modern, as the modern pressed about us, and since their theory of our better living was from an early time that we should renew the quest of the ancient on the very first possibility I simply grew greater in the faith that somehow to manage that would constitute success in life. I never found myself deterred from this fond view, which was implied in every question I asked, every answer I got, and every plan I formed."

Europe! It was as if Henry James had been born with a nostalgia for that far-away paradise. Was it not a legend in the family that he had recalled, from a visit to Paris in his second year, the wondrous aspect of the Place Vendôme? He was a preternaturally impressionable little creature, and something had excited him: his retina had retained the image, at once so harmonious and so imposing, of the beautiful Parisian square, the great mansions, the soft line of the roofs, the surprising column, so erect in the bright air. . . . And then there had been New York, the cozy back-parlour in Fourteenth Street, the hearth-rug, the glowing fire. . . . Could he remember a time when he had not been lying there, in the fading light of the winter dusk, drinking in the enchantment of those English picture-books? . . . It was so warm, so intimate, there was nothing to break

the spell. . . . Europe was all about him: in the Italian landscape just over his head, in the marble bust of the Bacchante between the windows, in the golden haze of the vast Prospect of Florence in the front room—he could see it through the gap in the red curtains. . . . The picture-books: they were European too. . . . The stiff glossy covers, the thick smooth pages, the colours, deep and rich, chocolate-brown, plum-colour, claret, and that funny chalky black. They were not colours, they were tones. . . . And the scenes, English scenes! . . . The stable-yard, the sleek fat horses, the blustering master, the coachman with his cockade. Master Jacky, home from Eton for his Christmas holidays, the charred stick in his hand, the footman's immaculate calves, the banisters and the chandelier, the charming young sisters with their golden ringlets, their blooming cheeks, the pretty blue sashes over their fresh muslin gowns. The breakfast-room, the rosy fire in the grate, the toast and the eggs on the table, the comfortable old grandfather unfolding his Times. And then the holly and the mistletoe, and the foaming ale, and the obsequious grooms, and the buxom nursemaids, and the gallant fox-hunting gentlemen, their crimson coat-tails on the wind, taking a fence, taking a hedge, taking that little green cottage perhaps. Was there anything one couldn't take—in England, in Europe?

Came Punch, and the wonder grew; came Dickens, and he had learned to read; came Thackeray, and Europe was more real to him now than his own three brothers. Europe, or was it only England? He had lived, in a way, so long in England. Those drawings of Leech's! And then Mrs. Perkins's Ball, and Penderennis, and David Copperfield—when had he begun to read them, when had he ceased to hear them read? But there was the Continent too: France and Italy. There was Gavarni's Paris and Toepffer's droll Geneva. And Florence, where the artists lived, and Rome. . . . It was all a world of colours and forms. . . . Was it wrapped in a sort of iridescent mist? . . . But that was the celestial atmosphere. . . . And every spring his parents had been going back: he was to see it face to face! And every spring they had suddenly changed their minds. Frustration, hope, frustration again—it only fanned his desire.

Thus, for the little boy, the very names of places and things in the other world had become "values and secrets and shibbo-

leths." He had lived in England, lived in Europe, in Thackeray's England, in Toepffer's Europe. . . . What other life, indeed, had he ever known?

America? New York? O yes, he had taken all *that* in! He had absorbed it; he had found it delightful, too. There had been Albany, for holidays and the long summer afternoons, Albany and the old garden sloping down to the stable, and the peach trees: Albany somehow had a flavour of peaches. There were the aunts and the uncles, a bewildering company, all so different, and each with a different legend. And the cousins, the pretty, happy, dancing cousins—they were always dancing: vague airs of the perennial German seemed ever to attend their steps. Had he not himself been taken, a mere mite of observation, to one of Kitty Emmet's "grown-up" assemblies? And there were always the other boys, and school. The Wards, for instance, who were so tough and brown and whose pockets bulged with apples and nuts: any one would have known that the Wards were New Englanders. And Simpson, who boasted that his father was a "stevedore"—mysterious eminence! And the theatre—what a world that had been! And Barnum's Museum. And the summer hotels: the wide verandahs, the ladies with their curls and crinolines and their little parasols, and the gentlemen, bewhiskered and grim-lipped or young and rakish and dressed in blazers and white pantaloons. And there were the artists and authors who were always drifting in and out of the house, Mr Cole, the "American Turner," and Mr Powers of the "busts," and "Howadji" Curtis, and Mr Emerson, whose silvery voice he had heard in the dusk of the back-parlour. And there were the other great men whom he had "met," outside, in the street, as he walked about with his hand in his father's: Mr Sumner, the Senator from Massachusetts, who had stopped and spoken to them, and General Winfield Scott, prodigious with the triumphs of the Mexican war, and Mr Irving, who had told them how Margaret Fuller—Margaret Fuller of the "Boston connection"—had been drowned the day before on the Jersey coast. Had he missed so much as a breath, a vibration of it all?

He had taken it in, he had listened and looked and marvelled. And yet, it was strange, the whole panorama had simply inflamed his desire. New York, America, *his* America had spoken of Europe with a single voice. There was a confused rumble and rumour in the background that referred to something else, to "busi-

ness," to politics, to the West, to the mountains and the woods, to strange vague villages and towns with Indian names and names out of history books. But of all these things he had heard so little at home; and there had been no Punch, no Gavarni, no Thackeray to make them picturesque and comprehensible. . . . There were the other boys, of course, but he had found the other boys so difficult to play with; and besides, he had never been allowed to remain long enough in any one school to make friends with them. . . . And as for the rest, it had been just like "Europe," a Europe plain instead of a Europe coloured! There was the castellated villa on Staten Island, where they had spent the summer: had it not been set up there just in order to remind one of what a real castle might be? And those country-houses on the Hudson—how pale they were beside the lithographs in Nash's Mansions of England in the Olden Time! But everything in New York had been like that; everything had sent him back to his dreams and his picture-books. The theatre: the plays he had seen, London Assurance and Nicholas Nickleby, were all so many evocations of Drury Lane. And there were the French acrobats at Barnum's, and the "Bavarian Beauties," and the opera, and Patti—Italian to the last echo. And there were his teachers, Count Adam Gurowski, for instance, the Polish refugee, and the "rank" Russian lady, and Mlle Delavigne, who had given him lessons at home and who had been simply a Gavarni caricature come to life. And the ladies in the summer hotels had always just been going to Paris, and the gentlemen had always just come back. . . . And then the artists and the authors. An American Turner implied the existence of a European one, and Mr Powers's busts had all been made in Italy, and "Howadji" Curtis's very name savoured of everything foreign. Mr Irving had been so much like an Englishman, and Mr Emerson's silvery voice had never been the voice of Fourteenth Street. The others? Alas, for the others, alas, for art in New York! Had they haunted the family fireside for any other purpose than to show a little boy how much more illustrious the artists of the Old World could not fail to be?

"I was somehow in Europe, since everything about me had been 'brought over.'" Thus James himself, in later years, summed up the atmosphere of his childhood. He had seen, he had heard, he had touched, he had all but literally tasted, in the land of his birth, nothing that was not a reflection, a reminder of that roman-

tic other land across the ocean. Had America no identity of its own? Was it all simply a noisy chaos, all that lay outside the sphere of the *cousinage*? Was it all just a rain of atoms, a storm of wind and dust? Something lay outside, beyond, behind, *something*; but why had he always been deterred—oh, so gently deterred—from investigating it? He had not been particularly curious about it. Those outside things, the things that were not “somehow” European—the streets were full of them—had struck him as rather ugly. They repelled him, they were difficult, like the boys at school. . . . Still, why had his parents discouraged him from making friends with the other boys? . . . Or had they discouraged him? It was only a breath, a hint. . . . Not that he greatly cared. . . . But then why were they always changing his schools? . . . Were they afraid of America, afraid of New York?

“I read into the whole connection,” Henry James continues, “the chill, or at least the indifference, of a foreseen and foredoomed detachment.” Why was it? How had it come about? What was at the bottom of it all? Was it only that the bewildered father, perpetually in search of a happier environment, could not submit to giving hostages to that little New York world in which he had ever been so profoundly ill at ease? For that father himself, adrift as he was, New York was only a half-way house. He was a prophet without honour in his own country, a nomad by the nature of things: how could he permit his children to take root in the city of the Philistines? If London was impracticable, New York was impossible—that was sufficiently clear. But another thought weighed upon his paternal imagination: New York was also dangerous. He had before him the example of his own brothers who, liberated as they were from the life of business, the only life for which that primitive society seemed to afford any provision, had, as we gather, generally come to grief. “He regaled us with no scandals,” Henry James remarks, “yet it somehow rarely failed to come out that each contemporary on his younger scene, each hero of each thrilling adventure, had, in spite of brilliant promise and romantic charm, ended badly, as badly as possible.” This, in fact, became for his sons a “grim little generalization,” so striking was the evidence that “scarce aught but disaster could, in that so unformed and unseasoned society, overtake young men who were in the least exposed. Not to have been im-

mediately launched in business of a rigorous sort," Henry James continues, "was to *be* exposed, in the absence I mean of some fairly abnormal predisposition to virtue; since it was a world so simply constituted that whatever wasn't business, or exactly an office or a 'store,' places in which people sat close and made money, was just simply pleasure, sought and sought only in places in which people got tipsy." And moreover, "it was just the ready, even when the moderate, possession of gold that determined, that hurried on, disaster." . . . Such were the fears the benevolent father nursed in his heart. His own brothers, with gold in their pockets, had gone to perdition; and here were his four little boys, eager, imaginative, impressionable—heaven be thanked!—but not cut out for business, and destined in their turn to inherit a share of the Albany gold. How could one be too careful?

It was a little tragicomedy of the New York of the 'fifties. The elder James could have no continuing city; he did not wish to anchor himself—that was perfectly true; but he was even more a parent than a philosopher; he had pondered the case, according to his lights, and he was filled with trepidation over the future of that little brood for whose "spiritual decency" he cared, as Henry James remarks, "unspeakably more than for anything else." Thrown in as he was upon himself, he had so few other active concerns. New York was dangerous, he had no doubt of that; and was it not inevitable that, as he saw only New York, he should have looked askance upon American life in general? . . . What did any one really know about this extraordinary national "experiment," this America into which destiny had cast them all and which they had taken as it were on faith, a country without a precedent and almost without a history, which, after the first great epoch of the Revolution, had fallen more and more into the hands of mountebank politicians and rascally business men, a country that certainly provided one with opportunities for making money, but in which it remained to be seen whether the higher human faculties would be able to survive at all? America was the dark continent! Who had understood it, who had explained it? Could one trust it? Could one go on, like the poets and the statesmen, protesting even the stoutest optimism? . . . How natural it was, in those last dispiriting years before the Civil War, that such thoughts should have invaded the mind of a sensitive fellow-citizen of Mr Astor the fur merchant and Commodore Vander-

bilt of the Erie! In the South men had their soil, and they lived by the faith of the soil. There was the West: for millions the West was a religion. The New England air still vibrated with the memories of the Revolution; and besides, if New England and the South had retained their colonial sentiment, they were impregnated with the traditions of American statesmanship. New York, on the other hand, was the metropolis, and those who loved the world foregathered there; but its own traditions had been lost and forgotten, trampled away by the ravenous feet of trade. It was the last quarter in which to seek either for the traces of the American past or for the omens of the American future. Natural it was, therefore, that the elder James, reflecting upon his family history, should have asked himself, in his gloomier moments, how far America itself was not responsible for "such a chronicle," as one of his sons describes it, "of early deaths, arrested careers, broken promises, orphaned children." Our sage, in short, our theologian, the father of those four impressionable boys, had become the victim of an obsession. American life was a quicksand in which everything one held most dear was in peril of being engulfed and lost. At all hazards one's own children must be prevented from getting their feet entangled in it.

Thus at the outset Henry James was shielded from any touch of the *profanum vulgus*. "It meanwhile fairly overtakes and arrests me," he writes in his reminiscences, "that our general medium of life in the circumstances I speak of was such as to make a large defensive verandah, which seems to have very stoutly and completely surrounded us, play more or less the part of a raft of rescue in too high a tide, too high a tide there about us of the ugly and the graceless." The ugly and the graceless were, to be sure, nine-tenths of human life; but that was the point, it was life itself this father feared on behalf of his children—since life, for them, presented itself in American terms alone. Endless were to be the consequences of all this in the career of Henry James. Even his brother William was to find it difficult to overcome that inherited fear: he might never have overcome it, in fact, if he had not found in Agassiz a great master to reassure him, to convince him not only that America was "all right," but that it offered him an adequate scope for *his* particular genius. Indeed, how far was not that final "plunge" of William James's, that philosophic, that pragmatic plunge into what he called "the muddy stream of

things," an almost conscious reaction against the "tender-mindedness" of the circle of his childhood? For Henry James America was to afford no Agassiz; he was to encounter no parallel case of an artist, a man of letters, eminent, equipped, magnetic, and at the same time at home in the new chaotic generation as Emerson, Prescott, Hawthorne had been at home in the simpler world of the past. In short, he was to find no Virgil for the dark path; and besides, he was more passive than his brother; he could not so easily react; he received impressions and he retained them.

. . . Europe was a paradise. . . . America was a wilderness. It signified nothing but calamity, destruction, oblivion.

In time, in the far future, the life and writings of Henry James were to manifest the effects of all these early—shall we call them?—illusions. They grew, they flourished: "brooding monster" that he was, or was to call himself, "born to discriminate *à tout propos*," how many preconceptions were to embed themselves in the depths of his mind, gradually, silently, how much of a sort of preliminary discrimination was to be imposed upon him, as it were, determining the field and the conditions of his fastidious thought! He accepted these idols of the provincial cave that had been bred so naturally by the character, the circumstances, the solicitude of his father, by the situation of his family, and all the influences of his childhood contributed to foster them.

For if he was protected from the common life, to what was he exposed? To the life of that little New York society which, if it was "open wide," as he says, "to the east and comparatively to the south," the east and the south that signified Europe and the lingering European order, was yet "screened in somehow conveniently from north and west." So far as the world of "business" was concerned, "the word had been passed, all round," he remarks, "that we didn't, that we couldn't and shouldn't, understand these things." But when, from that little screened society, the element of business was subtracted, what was left? What was left for a child to absorb, a child so impressionable that "figures, faces, furniture, sounds, smells and colours" had become for him "a positive little orgy of the senses and riot of the mind"? Nothing, virtually, but echoes of the *beau monde* across the ocean. Along with business the men had vanished from the scene: there remained only, as our author remarks in one of his prefaces, "the music-masters and French pastry-cooks, the ladies and children—

immensely present and immensely numerous these, but testifying with a collective voice to the extraordinary absence . . . of a single male interest." What remained, in short, was "the wondrous fact that ladies might live for pleasure, pleasure always, pleasure alone." Ah, that New York society of the Age of Innocence, of N. P. Willis and *Nothing to Wear!* Ah, those dreams of the Tuileries, of Paris gowns and English lords! Ask the freshets in the spring why they run to the deep sea!

Henry James looked and listened. What did he hear? What ingenuous and charming discourses on the conduct of life? What hymns to the Graces? What notes of a perpetual song in which the artless and the elegant, the virginal and the voluptuous were blended in equal measure? This little society, so intensely feminine, was it not an unregarded, but ever so keenly regarding protectorate, as it were, of the fashionable world of England and France? How natural it was then that, in the midst of his romantic dream of the Old World, a second romantic dream should have begun to take form in Henry James's mind. Countesses, duchesses, great ladies, noble gentlemen were so obviously the heroes and the heroines of the wondrous European fairy-tale! That was the New York idea, and all the stories he had read, all the pictures he had absorbed, had prepared him to believe it: the great world was a world beyond good and evil. . . . Was it another illusion, this fruit of a sequestered adolescence? But what "reality" of his own had he ever experienced? He had been removed from the discipline of the streets: had he been subjected to any other discipline? . . . He had "read too many novels." . . . And his father's "Ideas" had been so impalpable: how could he have derived from *that* source any "interpretation of the universe"? The elder James had been so irrepressibly optimistic; he had had such a cloudless faith in human nature; he had heard so much about discipline in his own bitter Presbyterian youth; he had trusted his children to find the right pasturage for their souls. . . . But admitting that problem about the other boys (who were "so difficult to play with") admitting that they had "no companions," would a little history, not to say a little more Latin and Greek, not to add a little more continuity, have come amiss?

At twelve, Henry James had at last been taken to Europe; at sixteen he had been brought home again. His family had aban-

done New York; henceforward, until he was twenty-one, Newport was to remain his home. But for four years, the years of awakening, he had experienced in the Old World a riot of "recognitions"; he had been so "pierced," as he put it later, "by the sharp outland dart, as to be able ever afterwards but to move about, vaguely and helplessly" with the shaft still in his side. Ah, that Europe of "the complex order and the coloured air"! There had been the first night in London . . . the thick, heavy smell of the atmosphere that had given him such a sense of possession. There had been the soft summer evening when they had arrived in Paris and he had hung over the balcony, drinking in the shadowy mystery of the Rue de la Paix. There had been the old inn at Lyons, so redolent of the true *vie de province* and of all the voices and graces of the past. And the first castle, the first ruin, the first peasant in sabots! There had been the old thick-walled, green-shuttered pension-school at Geneva; and Boulogne, where Thackeray's world had come to life under his eyes; and the legendary woods at Bonn. And London again, Hogarth's London, and Paris, the old and the new. He had seen the Empress, young and fair and shining; he had seen the baby Prince Imperial borne amid glittering swords on his progress to Saint-Cloud. And there had been the Luxembourg and the great still rooms of the Louvre, the left bank, the quays, the old bookshops, the long black Rue de Seine. Above all, he had had his taste—such a tantalizing taste!—of the *beau monde* itself. Was he ever to forget that English family at Geneva to whom, in the first flush of their own admiration for Adam Bede, his parents had confidently lent the book? "I catch again," he writes in his reminiscences, "the echo of their consternation on receiving it back with the remark that all attempt at an interest in such people, village carpenters and Methodists, had proved vain—for *that* style of Anglo-Saxon; together with that of my own excited wonder about such other people, those of the style in question, those somehow prodigiously presented by so rare a delicacy, so proud a taste, and made thus to irradiate a strange historic light." And there had been the pretty young Marquise, "unmistakably 'great,' exhaling from afar," as he had encouraged himself to imagine, "the scented air of the Tuileries," who had looked into their compartment, where her own servants were travelling, on that memorable journey from Cologne to Paris, and smiled, and even pouted,

through her elegant patience. She had "caused to swim before me somehow," he says, "such a view of happy privilege at the highest pitch as made me sigh the more sharply, even if the less professedly, for our turning our backs on the complex order, the European." . . . He had, in short, absorbed the "European virus"; he had come home with an aching prevision of "the comparative, not to say the absolute, absence of tonic accent in the appearances complacently awaiting" him.

He had come home, home to Newport. His affections had been fixed irretrievably upon the Old World. Picturesque Europe, social Europe: ah, that "sublime synthesis" of his early reveries! Who could question it? Was it not for ever the Great Good Place, the abode of honour, order, beauty, of all the elegances? That was the faith of Newport, at least, "old Newport," the Newport of the "mildly and reminiscentially desperate," the Newport of those who were always "going back," again, and again, and yet again, "with a charming, smiling, pleading inconsequence," the Newport of the "inverted romantics," of the wanderers between two worlds, the America for which Europe had unfitted them, and the Europe which, Americans as they were, they had never been able to call their own. Newport was not New York, the New York of the music-masters and the French pastry-cooks. The bright, the brisk, the fresh, the artless had, in a measure, given place there to the mellow, the crepuscular, the retrospective. There was a difference, a difference of note, a difference of tone. . . . Morning and evening. . . . But were they not a morning and an evening of the same day? . . . In the one society as in the other the great world across the sea was the dream of every heart. Criticism only began "after that."

It was here, encircled by his family and John La Farge, in that "wondrous esoteric quarter," as he describes it, "peopled just by us and our friend and our common references," that Henry James set to work to learn the craft of a writer. He was already a "novelist *en herbe*"; and he had himself perceived that his impressions "were naught without a backing, a stout stiff hard-grained underside that would hold them together and of which the terrible name was simply science, otherwise learning, and learning exclusively by books." He was to become a novelist, in short, by studying other novelists: such was the design with which he assumed the obligations of an apprenticeship that was to have,

in its own way, so marvellous a flowering. The circumstances of his life and character were to intensify, as the years passed, this self-dedication of the craftsman; meanwhile, we observe that his reading confirmed the romantic prepossessions with which he looked out upon the world. Who that has turned the pages of the Notes of a Son and Brother can forget the ardour of those references to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*? It took its place, the great review, it took its place, for James at Newport, "as the very head-spring of culture, a mainstay in exile, and"—let us note his words—"as opening wide in especial the doors of that fictive portrayal of a society which put a price, for the brooding young reader, on cases, on *cadres*, in the *Revue* parlance, already constituted and propitiously lighted. Then it was," our author continues, "that the special tension of the dragged-out day from Cologne to Paris proved, on the absurdest scale, a preparation, justified itself as a vivid point of reference: I was to know what the high periodical meant when I encountered in its *études de mœurs* the blue-chinned corruptible, not to say corrupt, *larbin* and the smart *soubrette*; it was, above all, a blessing to feel myself, in the perusal of M Octave Feuillet, an education, as I supposed, of the taste, not at a marked disadvantage; since who but the Petite Comtesse herself had swung her crinoline in and out of my prospect, or, to put it better, of my preserved past, on one of my occasions of acutest receptivity?" I have said that James's reading confirmed the romantic prepossessions with which he looked out upon life; and, in fact, what do we discern between the lines that I have just quoted? Had it escaped him that the novelists whom he most admired had concerned themselves almost exclusively with the world of fashion? That they had, indeed, as the children of Balzac, written of that world with all of Balzac's own admiring astonishment? *The great world was the great theme of the great novelists*: we cannot doubt that in the depths of James's mind some such principle as this had already begun to take form. He who had never been able to question a European precedent and who seemed, as one of his friends remarks, "to have read all Balzac in the cradle," had accepted as axiomatic a doctrine that everything in his life had prepared him to believe. . . . If one meant to be a great novelist—one must—somehow—the great world—But how?—Where?—In America?—That was a little perplexing.—But one could leave so much to the future.

He had passed into a silent ecstasy of dreams, thoughts, plans. "The above-mentioned H.," his brother William writes in a letter of the time, "could in no wise satisfy my craving for knowledge of family and friends—he didn't seem to have been on speaking terms with anyone for some time past, and could tell me nothing of what they did, said or thought, about any given subject." He was immersed in his own fantasies—"not a little mildly—though oh so mildly—morose or anxiously mute," as he remembered later; he felt within himself the stir of a prodigious talent. And thus, confined within that warm little coterie, circumfused with the air of his father's household, an air "stimulating," as a visitor describes it, "like that of a high mountain near the tropics," he began to premeditate the creation of a world of his own. He had reached, let us add in his own words, the age of twenty "in well-nigh grotesque unawareness of the properties of the atmosphere in which he but wanted to claim that he had been nourished."

BE A SPORT

BY BAKER BROWNELL

They have tipped Minnie with quarters: the week has clattered round on French heels to Thursday afternoon, and the rustle of eaters in Henrici's is a thick wind in the corn.

She has served up this Thursday noon on numerous white dishes, and the man who sits thickly at the fourth table behind a prosperous waistcoat will have a steak and onions, no doubt, with coffee on the side and a piece of pie.

He will tip Minnie with quarters, and his smile waits for her under the shuffling of luncheons as a retriever waits when a duck stumbles in the air and falls. For years ago he learned his smile in a sales campaign at a good price.

It is past rush hour, and three o'clock slips from her slim body like a little white apron. And to-night a man with a prosperous waistcoat and a car will carry her no doubt somewhere deep into the lemon-coloured moonlight.



ITOW. BY RUDOLF VON HUHN

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A MARRIED MAN'S STORY

BY KATHERINE MANSFIELD

IT is evening. Supper is over. We have left the small, cold dining-room, we have come back to the sitting-room where there is a fire. All is as usual. I am sitting at my writing-table which is placed across a corner so that I am behind it, as it were, and facing the room. The lamp with the green shade is alight. I have before me two large books of reference, both open, a pile of papers. . . . All the paraphernalia, in fact, of an extremely occupied man. My wife, with our little boy on her lap, is in a low chair before the fire. She is about to put him to bed before she clears away the dishes and piles them up in the kitchen for the servant-girl to-morrow morning. But the warmth, the quiet, and the sleepy baby have made her dreamy. One of his red woollen boots is off, one is on. She sits, bent forward, clasping the little bare foot, staring into the glow, and as the fire quickens, falls, flares again, her shadow—an immense Mother and Child—is here and gone again upon the wall. . . .

Outside it is raining. I like to think of that cold drenched window behind the blind, and beyond, the dark bushes in the garden, their broad leaves bright with rain, and beyond the fence, the gleaming road with the two hoarse little gutters singing against each other, and the wavering reflections of the lamps, like fishes' tails. While I am here, I am there, lifting my face to the dim sky, and it seems to me it must be raining all over the world—that the whole earth is drenched, is sounding with a soft quick patter or hard steady drumming, or gurgling and something that is like sobbing and laughing mingled together, and that light playful splashing that is of water falling into still lakes and flowing rivers. And all at once and the same moment I am arriving in a strange city, slipping under the hood of the cab while the driver whips the cover off the breathing horse, running from shelter to shelter, dodging someone, swerving by someone else. I am conscious of tall houses, their doors and shutters sealed against the night, of dripping balconies and sodden flower-pots, I am brushing through deserted gardens

and falling into moist-smelling summer-houses (you know how soft and almost crumbling the wood of a summer-house is in the rain); I am standing on the dark quayside, giving my ticket into the wet red hand of the old sailor in an oilskin. How strong the sea smells! How loudly the tied-up boats knock against one another! I am crossing the wet stackyard, hooded in an old sack, carrying a lantern, while the house-dog, like a soaking doormat, springs, shakes himself over me. And now I am walking along a deserted road—it is impossible to miss the puddles and the trees are stirring—stirring. . . .

But one could go on with such a catalogue for ever—on and on—until one lifted the single arum lily leaf and discovered the tiny snails clinging, until one counted . . . and what then? Aren't those just the signs, the traces of my feeling? The bright green streaks made by someone who walks over the dewy grass? Not the feeling itself. And as I think that, a mournful glorious voice begins to sing in my bosom. Yes, perhaps that is nearer what I mean. What a voice! What power! What velvety softness! Marvellous!

Suddenly my wife turns round quickly. She knows—how long has she known?—that I am not "working." It is strange that with her full, open gaze, she should smile so timidly—and that she should say in such a hesitating voice, "What are you thinking?"

I smile and draw two fingers across my forehead in the way I have. "Nothing," I answer softly.

At that she stirs, and still trying not to make it sound important, she says: "Oh, but you must have been thinking of something!"

Then I really meet her gaze, meet it fully, and I fancy her face quivers. Will she never grow accustomed to these simple—one might say—everyday little lies? Will she never learn not to expose herself—or to build up defences?

"Truly, I was thinking of nothing."

There! I seem to see it dart at her. She turns away, pulls the other red sock off the baby—sits him up, and begins to unbutton him behind. I wonder if that little soft rolling bundle sees anything, feels anything? Now she turns him over on her knee, and in this light, his soft arms and legs waving, he is extraordinarily like a young crab. A queer thing is I can't connect him with my wife and myself; I've never accepted him as ours. Each time when I come into the hall and see the perambulator, I catch myself thinking: "H'm, someone has brought a baby!" Or, when his crying

wakes me at night, I feel inclined to blame my wife for having brought the baby in from outside. The truth is, that though one might suspect her of strong maternal feelings, my wife doesn't seem to me the type of woman who bears children in her own body. There's an immense difference! Where is that . . . animal ease and playfulness, that quick kissing and cuddling one has been taught to expect of young mothers? She hasn't a sign of it. I believe that when she ties its bonnet she feels like an aunt and not a mother. But of course I may be wrong; she may be passionately devoted . . . I don't think so. At any rate, isn't it a trifle indecent to feel like this about one's own wife? Indecent or not, one has these feelings. And one other thing. How can I reasonably expect my wife, a *broken-hearted woman*, to spend her time tossing the baby? But that is beside the mark. She never even began to toss when her heart was whole.

And now she has carried the baby to bed. I hear her soft, deliberate steps moving between the dining-room and the kitchen, there and back again, to the tune of the clattering dishes. And now all is quiet. What is happening now? Oh, I know just as surely as if I'd gone to see—she is standing in the middle of the kitchen facing the rainy window. Her head is bent, with one finger she is tracing something—nothing—on the table. It is cold in the kitchen; the gas jumps; the tap drips; it's a forlorn picture. And nobody is going to come behind her, to take her in his arms, to kiss her soft hair, to lead her to the fire and to rub her hands warm again. Nobody is going to call her or to wonder what she is doing out there. And she knows it. And yet, being a woman, deep down, deep down, she really does expect the miracle to happen; she really could embrace that dark, dark deceit, rather than live—like this.

To live like this . . . I write those words, very carefully, very beautifully. For some reason I feel inclined to sign them, or to write underneath—Trying a New Pen. But seriously, isn't it staggering to think what may be contained in one innocent-looking little phrase? It tempts me—it tempts me terribly. Scene. The supper-table. My wife has just handed me my tea. I stir it, I lift the spoon, idly chase and then carefully capture a speck of tea-leaf, and having brought it ashore, I murmur, quite gently, "How long shall we continue to live—like—this?" And immediately there is that famous "blinding flash and deafening roar. Huge pieces of débris (I must say I like débris) are flung into the air . . .

and when the dark clouds of smoke have drifted away” But this will never happen; I shall never know it. It will be found upon me “intact” as they say. “Open my heart and you will see”

Why? Ah, there you have me! There is the most difficult question of all to answer. Why do people stay together? Putting aside “for the sake of the children,” and “the habit of years” and “economic reasons” as lawyers’ nonsense—it’s not much more—if one really does try to find out why it is that people don’t leave each other, one discovers a mystery. It is because they can’t; they are bound. And nobody on earth knows what are the bonds that bind them except those two. Am I being obscure? Well, the thing itself isn’t so frightfully crystal clear, is it? Let me put it like this. Supposing you are taken, absolutely, first into his confidence and then into hers. Supposing you know all there is to know about the situation. And having given it not only your deepest sympathy, but your most honest impartial criticism, you declare, very calmly (but not without the slightest suggestion of relish—for there is—I swear there is—in the very best of us—something that leaps up and cries “A-ahh!” for joy at the thought of destroying) “Well, my opinion is that you two people ought to part. You’ll do no earthly good together. Indeed, it seems to me, it’s the duty of either to set the other free.” What happens then? He—and she—agree. It is their conviction too. You are only saying what they have been thinking all last night. And away they go to act on your advice, immediately And the next time you hear of them they are still together. You see—you’ve reckoned without the unknown quantity—which is their secret relation to each other—and what they can’t disclose even if they want to. Thus far you may tell and no further. Oh, don’t misunderstand me! It need not necessarily have anything to do with their sleeping together. . . . But this brings me to a thought I’ve often half entertained. Which is that human beings, as we know them, don’t choose each other at all. It is the owner, the second self inhabiting them, who makes the choice for his own particular purposes, and—this may sound absurdly far-fetched—it’s the second self in the other which responds. Dimly—dimly—or so it has seemed to me—we realize this, at any rate to the extent that we realize the hopelessness of trying to escape. So that, what it all amounts to is—if the impermanent selves of my wife and me are happy—*tant mieux pour nous*

—if miserable—*tant pis*. . . . But I don't know, I don't know. And it may be that it's something entirely individual in me—this sensation (yes, it is even a sensation) of how extraordinarily *shell-like* we are as we are—little creatures, peering out of the sentry-box at the gate, ogling through our glass case at the entry, wan little servants, who never can say for certain, even, if the master is out or in. . . .

The door opens . . . my wife. She says, "I am going to bed."

And I look up vaguely, and vaguely say, "You are going to bed."

"Yes." A tiny pause. "Don't forget—will you?—to turn out the gas in the hall."

And again I repeat, "The gas in the hall."

There was a time—the time before—when this habit of mine—it really has become a habit now—it wasn't one then—was one of our sweetest jokes together. It began, of course, when, on several occasions, I really was deeply engaged and I didn't hear. I emerged only to see her shaking her head and laughing at me, "You haven't heard a word!"

"No. What did you say?"

Why should she think that so funny and charming? She did; it delighted her. "Oh, my darling, it's so like you! It's so—so—" And I knew she loved me for it. I knew she positively looked forward to coming in and disturbing me, and so—as one does—I played up. I was guaranteed to be wrapped away every evening at ten-thirty p. m. But now? For some reason I feel it would be crude to stop my performance. It's simplest to play on. But what is she waiting for to-night? Why doesn't she go? Why prolong this? She is going. No, her hand on the door-knob, she turns round again, and she says in the most curious, small, breathless voice, "You're not cold?"

Oh, it's not fair to be as pathetic as that! That was simply damnable. I shuddered all over before I managed to bring out a slow "No-o!" while my left hand ruffles the reference pages.

She is gone; she will not come back again to-night. It is not only I who recognize that; the room changes too. It relaxes, like an old actor. Slowly the mask is rubbed off; the look of strained attention changes to an air of heavy, sullen brooding. Every line, every fold breathes fatigue. The mirror is quenched; the ash

whitens; only my sly lamp burns on. . . . But what a cynical indifference to me it all shows! Or should I perhaps be flattered? No, we understand each other. You know those stories of little children who are suckled by wolves and accepted by the tribe, and how for ever after they move freely among their fleet, grey brothers? Something like that has happened to me. But wait! That about the wolves won't do. Curious! Before I wrote it down, while it was still in my head, I was delighted with it. It seemed to express, and more, to suggest, just what I wanted to say. But written, I can smell the falseness immediately and the . . . source of the smell is in that word "fleet." Don't you agree? Fleet, grey brothers! "Fleet." A word I never use. When I wrote "wolves" it skimmed across my mind like a shadow and I couldn't resist it. Tell me! Tell me! Why is it so difficult to write simply—and not only simply but *sotto voce*, if you know what I mean? That is how I long to write. No fine effects—no *bravura*. But just the plain truth, as only a liar can tell it.

I light a cigarette, lean back, inhale deeply—and find myself wondering if my wife is asleep. Or is she lying in her cold bed, staring into the dark, with those trustful, bewildered eyes? Her eyes are like the eyes of a cow that is being driven along a road. "Why am I being driven—what harm have I done?" But I really am not responsible for that look; it's her natural expression. One day, when she was turning out a cupboard, she found a little old photograph of herself, taken when she was a girl at school. In her confirmation dress, she explained. And there were the eyes, even then. I remember saying to her, "Did you always look so sad?" Leaning over my shoulder, she laughed lightly, "Do I look sad? I think it's just . . . me." And she waited for me to say something about it. But I was marvelling at her courage at having shown it to me at all. It was a hideous photograph! And I wondered again if she realized how plain she was, and comforted herself with the idea that people who loved each other didn't criticize, but accepted everything, or if she really rather liked her appearance and expected me to say something complimentary. Oh, that was base of me! How could I have forgotten all the numberless times when I have known her turn away to avoid the light, press her face into my shoulders. And above all, how could I have forgotten the afternoon of our wedding day, when we sat on the green bench in the Botanical Gardens and listened to the band—how, in an

interval between two pieces, she suddenly turned to me and said in the voice in which one says, "Do you think the grass is damp?" or "Do you think it's time for tea?" . . . "Tell me, do you think physical beauty is so very important?" I don't like to think how often she had rehearsed that question. And do you know what I answered? At that moment, as if at my command, there came a great gush of hard, bright sound from the band, and I managed to shout above it cheerfully, "I didn't hear what you said." Devilish! Wasn't it? Perhaps not wholly. She looked like the poor patient who hears the surgeon say, "It will certainly be necessary to perform the operation—but not now!"

But all this conveys the impression that my wife and I were never really happy together. Not true! Not true! We were marvellously, radiantly happy. We were a model couple. If you had seen us together, any time, any place, if you had followed us, tracked us down, spied, taken us off our guard, you still would have been forced to confess, "I have never seen a more ideally suited pair." Until last autumn.

But really to explain what happened then I should have to go back and back, I should have to dwindle until my two hands clutched the banisters, the stair-rail was higher than my head, and I peered through to watch my father padding swiftly up and down. There were coloured windows on the landings. As he came up, first his bald head was scarlet; then it was yellow. How frightened I was! And when they put me to bed, it was to dream that we were living inside one of my father's big coloured bottles. For he was a chemist. I was born nine years after my parents were married. I was an only child, and the effort to produce even me—small, withered bud I must have been—sapped all my mother's strength. She never left her room again. Bed, sofa, window, she moved between the three. Well I can see her, on the window days, sitting, her cheek in her hand, staring out. Her room looked over the street. Opposite there was a wall plastered with advertisements for travelling shows and circuses and so on. I stand beside her, and we gaze at the slim lady in a red dress hitting a dark gentleman over the head with her parasol, or at the tiger peering through the jungle while the clown, close by, balances a bottle on his nose, or at a little golden-haired girl sitting on the knee of an old black man in a broad cotton hat . . . She says nothing. On sofa days there is a flannel dressing-gown that I loathe, and a cushion that keeps

on slipping off the hard sofa. I pick it up. It has flowers and writing sewn on. I ask what the writing says, and she whispers, "Sweet Repose!" In bed her fingers plait, in tight little plaits, the fringe of the quilt, and her lips are thin. And that is all there is of my mother, except the last queer "episode" that comes later.

My father . . . Curled up in the corner on the lid of a round box that held sponges, I stared at my father so long, it's as though his image, cut off at the waist by the counter, had remained solid in my memory. Perfectly bald, polished head, shaped like a thin egg, creased, creamy cheeks, little bags under the eyes, large pale ears like handles. His manner was discreet, sly, faintly amused, and tinged with impudence. Long before I could appreciate it, I knew the mixture. . . . I even used to copy him in my corner, bending forward, with a small reproduction of his faint sneer. In the evening his customers were, chiefly, young women; some of them came in every day for his famous fivepenny pick-me-up. Their gaudy looks, their voices, their free ways, fascinated me. I longed to be my father, handing them across the counter the little glass of bluish stuff they tossed off so greedily. God knows what it was made of. Years after I drank some, just to see what it tasted like, and I felt as though someone had given me a terrific blow on the head; I felt stunned. One of those evenings I remember vividly. It was cold; it must have been autumn, for the flaring gas was lighted after my tea. I sat in my corner and my father was mixing something; the shop was empty. Suddenly the bell jangled and a young woman rushed in, crying so loud, sobbing so hard, that it didn't sound real. She wore a green cape trimmed with fur and a hat with cherries dangling. My father came from behind the screen. But she couldn't stop herself at first. She stood in the middle of the shop and wrung her hands and moaned. I've never heard such crying since. Presently she managed to gasp out, "Give me a pick-me-up." Then she drew a long breath, trembled away from him and quavered, "I've had *bad news!*" And in the flaring gaslight I saw the whole side of her face was puffed up and purple; her lip was cut, and her eyelid looked as though it was gummed fast over the wet eye. My father pushed the glass across the counter, and she took the purse out of her stocking and paid him. But she couldn't drink; clutching the glass, she stared in front of her as if she could not believe what she saw. Each time she put her head back the tears spurted out again. Finally she put the glass

down. It was no use. Holding the cape with one hand, she ran in the same way out of the shop again. My father gave no sign. But long after she had gone I crouched in my corner, and when I think back it's as though I felt my whole body vibrating—"So that's what it is outside," I thought. "That's what it's like out there."

Do you remember your childhood? I am always coming across these marvellous accounts by writers who declare that they remember "everything, everything." I certainly don't. The dark stretches, the blanks, are much bigger than the bright glimpses. I seem to have spent most of my time like a plant in a cupboard. Now and again, when the sun shone, a careless hand thrust me out on to the window-sill, and a careless hand whipped me in again—and that was all. But what happened in the darkness—I wonder? Did one grow? Pale stem . . . timid leaves . . . white, reluctant bud. No wonder I was hated at school. Even the masters shrank from me. I somehow knew that my soft hesitating voice disgusted them. I knew, too, how they turned away from my shocked, staring eyes. I was small and thin, and I smelled of the shop; my nickname was Gregory Powder. School was a tin building, stuck on the raw hillside. There were dark red streaks like blood in the oozing clay banks of the playground. I hide in the dark passage, where the coats hang, and am discovered there by one of the masters. "What are you doing there in the dark?" His terrible voice kills me; I die before his eyes. I am standing in a ring of thrust out heads; some are grinning, some look greedy, some are spitting. And it is always cold. Big crushed up clouds press across the sky; the rusty water in the school tank is frozen; the bell sounds numb. One day they put a dead bird in my overcoat pocket. I found it just when I reached home. Oh, what a strange flutter there was at my heart, when I drew out that terribly soft, cold little body, with the legs thin as pins and the claws wrung. I sat on the back door step in the yard and put the bird in my cap. The feathers round the neck looked wet, and there was a tiny tuft just above the closed eyes that stood up too.—The smoke from our chimney poured downwards, and flakes of soot floated—soft, light in the air. Through a big crack in the cement yard a poor-looking plant with dull, reddish flowers had pushed its way.

But what has all this to do with my married happiness? How can all this affect my wife and me? Why—to tell what happened last autumn—do I run all this way back into the past? The past—

what is the past? I might say the star-shaped flake of soot on a leaf of the poor-looking plant, and the bird lying on the quilted lining of my cap, and my father's pestle and my mother's cushion, belong to it. But that is not to say they are any less mine than they were when I looked upon them with my very eyes, and touched them with these fingers. No, they are more; they are a living part of me. Who am I, in fact, as I sit here at this table, but my own past? If I deny that, I am nothing. And if I were to try to divide my life into childhood, youth, early manhood, and so on, it would be a kind of affectation; I should know I was doing it just because of the pleasantly important sensation it gives one to rule lines, and to use green ink for childhood, red for the next stage, and purple for the period of adolescence. For, one thing I have learnt, one thing I do believe is, Nothing Happens Suddenly. Yes, that is my religion, I suppose. . . .

My mother's death, for instance. Is it more distant from me to-day than it was then? It is just as close, as strange, as puzzling, and in spite of all the countless times I have recalled the circumstances, I know no more now than I did then, whether I dreamed them, or whether they really occurred. It happened when I was thirteen and I slept in a little strip of a room on what was called the half-landing. One night I woke up with a start to see my Mother, in her night-gown, without even the hated flannel dressing-gown, sitting on my bed. But the strange thing which frightened me was, she wasn't looking at me. Her head was bent; the short, thin tail of hair lay between her shoulders; her hands were pressed between her knees, and my bed shook; she was shivering. It was the first time I had ever seen her out of her own room. I said, or I think I said, "Is that you, Mother?" And as she turned round, I saw in the moonlight how queer she looked. Her face looked small—quite different. She looked like one of the boys at the school baths, who sits on a step, shivering just like that, and wants to go in and yet is frightened.

"Are you awake?" she said. Her eyes opened; I think she smiled. She leaned towards me. "I've been poisoned," she whispered. "Your father's poisoned me." And she nodded. Then, before I could say a word, she was gone, and I thought I heard the door shut. I sat quite still, I couldn't move, I think I expected something else to happen. For a long time I listened for something; there wasn't a sound. The candle was by my bed, but I was too

frightened to stretch out my hand for the matches. But even while I wondered what I ought to do, even while my heart thumped—everything became confused. I lay down and pulled the blankets round me. I fell asleep, and the next morning my Mother was found dead of failure of the heart.

Did that visit happen? Was it a dream? Why did she come to tell me? Or why, if she came, did she go away so quickly? And her expression—so joyous under the frightened look—was that real? I believed it fully the afternoon of the funeral, when I saw my Father dressed up for his part, hat and all. That tall hat so gleaming black and round was like a cork covered with black sealing-wax, and the rest of my Father was awfully like a bottle, with his face for the label—*Deadly Poison*. It flashed into my mind as I stood opposite him in the hall. And *Deadly Poison*, or old D. P., was my private name for him from that day.

Late, it grows late. I love the night. I love to feel the tide of darkness rising slowly and slowly washing, turning over and over, lifting, floating, all that lies strewn upon the dark beach, all that lies hid in rocky hollows. I love, I love this strange feeling of drifting—whither? After my Mother's death I hated to go to bed. I used to sit on the window-sill, folded up, and watch the sky. It seemed to me the moon moved much faster than the sun. And one big, bright green star I chose for my own. My star! But I never thought of it beckoning to me, or twinkling merrily for my sake. Cruel, indifferent, splendid—it burned in the airy night. No matter—it was mine! But, growing close up against the window, there was a creeper with small, bunched-up pink and purple flowers. These did know me. These, when I touched them at night, welcomed my fingers; the little tendrils, so weak, so delicate, knew I would not hurt them. When the wind moved the leaves, I felt I understood their shaking. When I came to the window, it seemed to me the flowers said among themselves, "The boy is here."

As the months passed, there was often a light in my Father's room below. And I heard voices and laughter. "He's got some woman with him," I thought. But it meant nothing to me. Then the gay voice, the sound of the laughter, gave me the idea it was one of the girls who used to come to the shop in the evenings—and gradually I began to imagine which girl it was. It was the dark one in the red coat and skirt, who once had given me a penny. A merry face stooped over me—warm breath tickled my neck—

there were little beads of black on her long lashes, and when she opened her arms to kiss me, there came a marvellous wave of scent! Yes, that was the one. Time passed, and I forgot the moon and my green star and my shy creeper—I came to the window to wait for the light in my Father's window, to listen for the laughing voice, until one night I dozed and I dreamed she came again—again she drew me to her, something soft, scented, warm, and merry hung over me like a cloud. But when I tried to see, her eyes only mocked me, her red lips opened and she hissed, "Little sneak! Little sneak!" But not as if she were angry, as if she understood, and her smile somehow was like a rat . . . hateful!

The night after, I lighted the candle and sat down at the table instead. By and by, as the flame steadied, there was a small lake of liquid wax, surrounded by a white, smooth wall. I took a pin and made little holes in this wall and then sealed them up faster than the wax could escape. After a time I fancied the candle flame joined in the game; it leapt up, quivered, wagged; it even seemed to laugh. But while I played with the candle and smiled and broke off the tiny white peaks of wax that rose above the wall and floated them on my lake, a feeling of awful dreariness fastened on me—yes, that's the word. It crept up from my knees to my thighs, into my arms; I ached all over with misery. And I felt so strangely that I couldn't move. Something bound me there by the table—I couldn't even let the pin drop that I held between my finger and thumb. For a moment I came to a stop, as it were.

Then the shrivelled case of the bud split and fell, the plant in the cupboard came into flower. "Who am I?" I thought. "What is all this?" And I looked at my room, at the broken bust of the man called Hahnemann on top of the cupboard, at my little bed with the pillow like an envelope. I saw it all, but not as I had seen before . . . Everything lived, everything. But that was not all. I was equally alive and—it's the only way I can express it—the barriers were down between us—I had come into my own world!

The barriers were down. I had been all my life a little outcast; but until that moment no one had "accepted" me; I had lain in the cupboard—or the cave forlorn. But now I was taken, I was accepted, claimed. I did not consciously turn away from the world of human beings; I had never known it; but I from that night did beyond words consciously turn towards my silent brothers . . .

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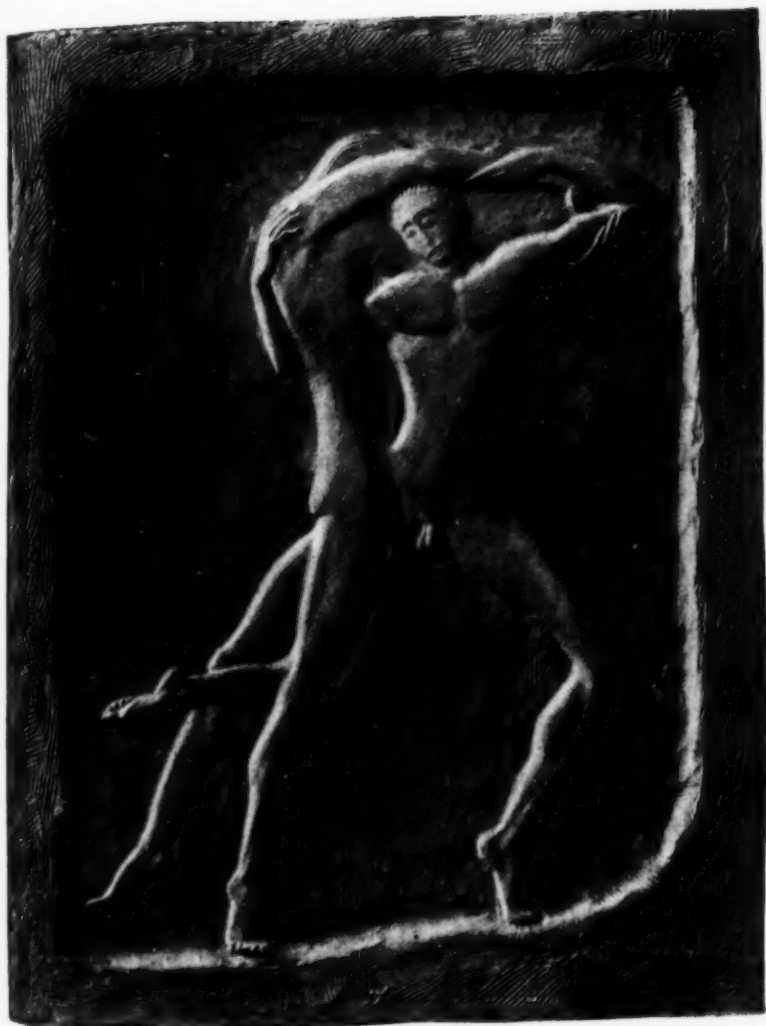
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MARCEL PROUST: THE PROPHET OF DESPAIR

BY FRANCIS BIRRELL

IT is the privilege of those known as the world's greatest artists to create the illusion of dragging the reader through the whole mechanism of life. Such was pre-eminently the gift of Shakespeare, whose tragedies appear to be microcosms of the universe. Such a gift was that of Balzac, for all his vulgarities and absurdities, if we may treat the whole *Comédie Humaine* as a single novel. Such, in his rare moments of prodigal creation, was the power of Tolstoy, whom Proust in some ways so much resembles. Such is the gift of Proust in his astonishing pseudo-autobiography—*A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. For it is the sense of imaginative wealth and creative facility that is the hall-mark of the first-rate genius, who must never appear to be reaching the end of his tether, but must always on the contrary leave the impression of there being better fish in his sea than have ever come out of it.

The outpouring of the romantic school of authors, their neglect of form, their absence of critical faculty, their devastating facility, have made this truth disagreeable and even doubtful to many minds, who feel more in sympathy with the costive author of *Adolphe* than with the continual flux of Victor Hugo. Yet if Victor Hugo be a great author at all, as he evidently is, it is because of this very fertility that we so much dislike, and if Benjamin Constant be not a really great artist, as he evidently is not, the reason must be sought in the absence of fertility, though we may find its absence sympathetic; while this same fertility, which is the whole essence of Balzac, is rendering him formidable and unattractive to a generation of readers. Now Proust was eminently fertile, and, within the limits imposed by his own delicate health, he could go on indefinitely, so profound and so all-embracing was his interest in human beings and human emotions. But he was fertile in a new way. Not for him was the uncritical spate of nineteenth century verbiage. His intellectual integrity, of which M. C. Dubos has written so well in his *Approximations*, always compelled him to check and

ponder every move upon the chess-board of life, every comment on human feelings. For Proust is the latest great prophet of sensibility, and it is bearing this in mind, that we can trace the intellectual stock of which he comes.

One of the great landmarks in French literature is pegged out for us by the Abbé Prévost's translation of *Clarissa Harlowe*, which burst on the new sentimental generation, starved on the superficial brilliance of the Regnards and their successors, with all the energy of a gospel. The adoration with which this great novel was received by the most brilliant intellects of eighteenth century France, seems to-day somewhat excessive, however deep be our sympathy with the mind and art of Richardson. Remember how Diderot speaks of him, Diderot the most complete embodiment of the eighteenth century with its sentimental idealism and fiery common sense—the man in whom reason and spirit were perfectly blended, the enthusiastic preacher of atheism and humanity.

"O Richardson, Richardson! homme unique à mes yeux. Tu seras ma lecture dans tous les temps. Forcé par les besoins pressants si mon ami tombe dans l'indigence, si la médiocrité de ma fortune ne suffit pas pour donner à mes enfants les soins nécessaires à leur éducation je vendrai mes livres, mais tu me resteras; tu me resteras sur le même rayon avec Virgile, Homère, Euripide, et Sophocle. Je vous lirai tour à tour. Plus on a l'âme belle, plus on aime la vérité, plus on a le goût exquis et pur, plus on connaît la nature, plus on estime les ouvrages de Richardson."

The new sentimental movement, developed to such a pitch of perfection by the author of *Clarissa Harlowe*, was one of enormous value to life and art. But inevitably it was pushed much too far, and the novels of the *école larmoyante* are now well-nigh intolerable, even when written by men of genius like Rousseau whose characters seem to spend their lives in one continual jet of tears in a country where the floodgates of ill-controlled emotion are never for an instant shut.

Rousseau had one great pupil, a great name in the history of the French novel, Stendhal. But he wore his Rousseau with a difference. For Rousseau represented, in his novels, but one side of the eighteenth century, the sentimental; but there was another, the scientific—and the life work of Stendhal consisted in an untiring

effort to combine the two. For what was the avowed ambition of the self-conscious sentimentalist that was Stendhal? Soaked in the writings of Lavater, de Tracy, and the Scotch metaphysicians, crossed with a romantic passion for Rousseau and the Elizabethan drama, he wished to be as *sec* as possible and boasted that he read a portion of the Code Civil every day—a document Rémy de Goncourt may be right in calling diffuse, but which is certainly not romantic. Nourished on Shakespeare, Rousseau, and de Tracy, Stendhal became one of the first completely modern men, who study the working of their minds with the imaginative enthusiasm, but also with the cold objectivity of a scientist dissecting a tadpole. Like the young scientist in Hans Andersen, his first instinct was to catch the toad and put it in spirits; but in this case the toad was his own soul. Stendhal was too much of a revolutionary in writing ever to have been completely successful, but the immensity of his achievement may be gauged by the fact that parts of *l'Amour*, and still more of *Le Rouge et le Noir* are really of practical value to lovers who might profit considerably in the conduct of their affairs by a careful study of Stendhal's advice, if only they were ever in a position to listen to reason. Now this is something quite new in fiction and would have astonished his grandfather Richardson. Proust is in turn the intellectual child of Stendhal, and has bespattered *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* with expressions of admiration for his master. In truth he has taken over not only the methods, but the philosophy of his teacher. It will be remembered that Stendhal insists in his analysis of *L'Amour-Passion* that crystallization can only be effected after doubt has been experienced. So, for Proust, love, the *mal sacré*, as he calls it, can only be called into being by jealousy, *le plus affreux des supplices*. We can want nothing, till we have been cheated out of getting it; whence it follows that we can get nothing till we have ceased to want it, and in any case, once obtained, it would *ipso facto* cease to be desirable. Hence Man "how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!" is doomed by the nature of his being to unsatisfied desire and restless misery, till Proust becomes, as I have called him above, the prophet of despair. He is a master of the agonizing moments spent hanging in vain round the telephone, the weeks passed waiting for letters that never come, and the terrible reactions after one's own fatal letter has been irrevocably posted

and not all the jewels of Golconda can extract it from the pillar-box. For how does the hero of his novels finally pass under the sway of Albertine? Through agony caused by the cutting of an appointment.

"Comme chaque fois que la porte-cochère s'ouvrait, la concierge appuyait sur un bouton électrique, qui éclairait l'escalier et comme il n'y avait pas de locataires, qui ne fussent rentrés, je quittai immédiatement la cuisine, et revins m'asseoir dans l'antichambre, épiant là où la tenture un peu trop étroite, qui ne couvrait pas la porte vitrée de notre appartement, laissait passer la sombre raie verticale faite par la demi-obscurité de l'escalier. Si tout d'un coup cette raie devenait d'un blond doré c'est qu'Albertine viendrait d'entrer en bas et serait dans deux minutes près de moi: personne d'autre ne pourrait plus venir à cette heure-là. Et je restai, ne pouvant plus détacher mes yeux de la raie, qui s'obstinait à demeurer sombre; je me penchais tout entier pour être sûr de bien voir; mais j'avais beau regarder, le noir trait vertical, malgré mon désir passionné, ne me donnait pas l'enivrante allégresse que j'aurais eue, si je l'avais vu changé par enchantement soudain et significatif en un lumineux barreau d'or. C'était bien de l'inquiétude pour cette Albertine à laquelle je n'avais pas pensé trois minutes pendant toute la soirée Guermantes! Mais réveillant les sentiments d'attente jadis éprouvés à propos d'autres jeunes filles, surtout de Gilberte, quand elle tardait à venir, la privation possible d'un simple plaisir physique me causait une cruelle souffrance morale."

Indeed happiness in love is by nature impossible, as it demands an impossible spiritual relationship.

"Si nous pensions que les yeux d'une telle fille ne sont qu'une brillante rondelle de mica, nous ne serions pas avides de connaître et d'unir à nous sa vie. Mais nous sentons que ce qui luit dans ce disque réfléchissant n'était pas dû uniquement à sa composition matérielle, que ce sont, inconnues de nous, les noires ombres des idées, que cet être se fait, relativement aux gens et aux lieux qu'il connaît, pelouses des hippodromes, sable des chemins, où, pédalant à travers champs et bois, m'eut entraîné cette petite péri, plus séduisante pour moi que celle du paradis persan—les ombres aussi de la maison, où elle va rentrer, des projets qu'elle a formés, ou

qu'on a formés pour elle, avec ses désirs, ses sympathies, ses répulsions, son obscure et incessante volonté. Je savais que je ne posséderais pas cette jeune cycliste, si je ne possédais aussi ce qu'il y avait dans ses yeux. Et c'était par conséquent toute sa vie, qui m'inspirait du désir—désir douloureux parce que je le sentais irréalisable, mais enivrant, parce que ce qui avait été jusque-là ma vie ayant cessé brusquement d'être ma vie totale, n'étant plus qu'une petite partie de l'espace étendu devant moi, que je brûlais de couvrir et qui était fait de la vie de ces jeunes filles, m'offrait ce prolongement, cette multiplication de soi-même qui est le bonheur. Et sans doute qu'il n'y eût entre nous aucune habitude—comme aucune idée—communes devait le rendre plus difficile de me lier avec elles et leur plaire. Mais peut-être aussi c'était grâce à ces différences, à la conscience qu'il n'entrait pas dans la composition de la nature et des actions de ces filles un seul élément, que je connus, ou possédasse, que venait en moi de succéder à la satiété la soif—pareille à celle dont brûle une terre altérée—d'une vie que mon âme, parce qu'elle n'en avait jamais reçu jusqu'ici une seule goutte absorberait d'autant plus avidement, à longs traits, dans une plus parfaite imbibition."

Proust, having thus reduced all human society to misery builds upon the ruins his philosophy of salvation: Only by much suffering shall we enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, that is to say, shall we be enabled to see ourselves solely and simply as members of the human race, to perceive what is essential and fundamental in everybody beneath the trappings of manners, birth, or fortune, learn to be really intelligent. Love and jealousy alone can open to us the portals of intelligence. Thus in the opening pages of *Du Côté de Chez Swann*, the poor little boy, who, because M Swann is dining with his parents, cannot receive in bed his mother's kiss, starts on the long spiritual journey which is to run parallel to that of the brilliant unhappy *mondain* guest. Miserable at being left alone he desperately sends down to his mother an agonized note by his nurse, and in his agitation he hates Swann whom he regards as the cause of his misery and continues to reflect:

"L'angoisse que je venais d'éprouver, je pensais que Swann s'en serait bien moqué, s'il avait lu ma lettre et en avait deviné mon but—or, au contraire, comme je l'avais appris plus tard, une angoisse

semblable fut le tourment de longues années de sa vie et personne aussi bien que lui peut-être n'aurait pu me comprendre: lui, cette angoisse qu'il y a à sentir l'être qu'on aime, dans un lieu de plaisir où l'on n'est pas, où on ne peut pas le rejoindre, c'est l'amour qui la lui a fait connaître, l'amour auquel elle est en quelque sorte prédestinée, par laquelle elle sera accaparée, spécialisée; mais quand, comme pour moi, elle est entrée en nous avant qu'il ait encore fait son apparition dans notre vie, elle flotte, en l'attendant vague et libre, sans affectation déterminée, au service un jour d'un sentiment, le lendemain d'un autre, tantôt de la tendresse filiale ou de l'amitié pour un camarade. Et la joie avec laquelle je fis mon premier apprentissage quand Françoise vint me dire que ma lettre serait remise. Swann l'avait bien connue aussi, cette joie trompeuse, que nous donne quelque ami, quelque parent de la femme que nous aimons, quand arrivant à l'hôtel ou au théâtre où elle se trouve, pour quelque mal, redoute, ou première, où il va la retrouver, cet ami nous aperçoit errant dehors, attendant désespérément quelque occasion de communiquer avec elle."

"We brought nothing into the world," remarked the first Christian stoic, "and it is certain we shall take nothing out of it." He might have made an exception for our personality, that enormous anonymity, unmalleable as granite, and unchanging as the ocean, which we brought along with us from a thousand ancestors and shall carry unaltered into the grave. Swann and little Proust both endowed with sensibility could shake hands with each other across the generations: all the experiences of one, all the innocence of the other were as nothing beside that similarity of temperament, which calls to us irrevocably, as Christ called to Matthew at the receipt of custom, and bids us share with our friend the miseries of the past and the terrors of the future.

Proust's youth was spent in Paris during that period when France was spiritually and politically severed by the *Affaire Dreyfus* and for him the *Affaire* becomes the touchstone of sensibility and intelligence. To be a Dreyfusard means to pass beyond the sheltered harbour of one's own *clique* and interest into the uncharted seas of human solidarity. Hard indeed is the way of the rich man, the aristocrat, the snob, or the gentleman, who wishes to find salvation during the *Affaire*. He must leave behind him taste, beauty, comfort, and education, consort, in spirit at least, with intolerable Jews,

fifth-rate politicians, and insufferable *arrivistes*, before worthily taking up the burden of human misery, and routing the forces of superstition and stupidity. And there is only one school for this lesson, the school of romantic love, that is to say of carking jealousy, in the throes of which all men are equal. Little Proust himself, his bold and beautiful friend the Marquis de Saint Loup, the eccentric and arrogant M de Charlus, even the stupid high-minded Prince de Guermantes, who all know the meaning of romantic love, as opposed to the facile pleasure of successive mistresses, will eventually, be it only for a short moment, triumphantly stand the test. But Saint Loup's saintly mother, Mme de Mar-santes, the rakish Duc de Guermantes and his brilliant, charming, but limited wife, will never put out to sea on the ship of misery, bound for the ever-receding shores of romantic love and universal comprehension. They will never risk their lives for one great moment, for the satisfaction of unbounded passion. Swann, tortured and fascinated by his flashy *cocotte*, little Proust lacerated by the suspected infidelities of the niece of a Civil Servant, Saint Loup in the clutches of an obscure and ill-conditioned actress of budding genius, M de Charlus broken by the sheer brutality of his young musician, such are the people who have their souls and such are the painful schools in which Salvation is learned—the Salvation that comes from forgetting social prejudice and from not mistaking the "plumage for the dying bird," from judging people by their intrinsic merit, from making no distinction between servants and masters, between Prince and Peasant. For, as the author insists with almost maddening iteration, good brains and good breeding never go together: all ultimate talent and perception is with the cad. The price to pay is heavy and incessant. A little easy happiness, a little recovery from hopeless love, a passing indifference to ill-requested affection can undo all the good acquired by endless misery in the long course of years.

Such I take to be the fundamental thought underlying *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* in its present unfinished state, though we cannot tell what surprises the succeeding volumes (happily completed) may have in store for us. I have insisted, at perhaps excessive length, on the general mental background to this vast epic of jealousy, because it is not very easy to determine. The enormous wealth of the author's gifts tends for the superficial ornament. For

Proust combines to a degree never before realized in literature, the qualities of the aesthete and the scientist. It is the quality which first strikes the reader who does not notice in the aesthetic rapture communicated by perfect style, that all pleasures are made pegs for disillusion. Human beauty, the beauty of buildings, of the sea, of the sky, the beauty of transmitted qualities in families and in the country-side, the beauty of history, of good breeding, of self-assurance, few people have felt these things as Proust. For him the soft place-names of France are implicit with memories too deep for tears. Let us take one passage among many where the aesthete Proust is feeling intensely a thousand faint suggestions:

"Quand je rentrai, le concierge de l'hôtel me remit une lettre de deuil, où faisait part le Marquis et la Marquise de Gonneville, le Vicomte et la Vicomtesse d'Amfreville, le Comte et la Comtesse de Berneville, le Marquis et la Marquise de Graincourt, le Comte d'Amenoncourt, la Comtesse de Mainville, le Comte et la Comtesse de Franquetot, la Comtesse de Chaverny, née d'Aigleville, et de laquelle je compris enfin pourquoi elle m'était envoyée, quand je reconnus les noms de la Marquise de Cambremer, née du Mesnil la Guichard, du Marquis et de la Marquise de Cambremer, et que je vis que la morte, une cousine des Cambremer, s'appelait Eléonore-Euphrasie-Humbertine de Cambremer, Comtesse de Criquetot. Dans toute l'étendue de cette famille provinciale, dont le dénombrement remplissait des lignes fières et serrées, pas un bourgeois et d'ailleurs pas un titre connu, mais tout le ban et l'arrière-ban des nobles de la région, qui faisaient chanter leurs noms,—ceux de tous les lieux intéressants du pays,—aux joyeuses finales en ville, en court, parfois plus sourdes (en tot). Habillés des tuiles de leur château ou du crépi de leur église, la tête branlante dépassant à peine la voûte ou le corps-de-logis et seulement pour se coiffer du lanternon ou des colombages du toit en poivrière, ils avaient l'air d'avoir sonné le rassemblement de tous les jolis villages échelonnés ou dispersés à cinquante lieues à la ronde et de les avoir disposés en formation serrée, sans une lacune, sans un intrus dans le damier compact et rectangulaire de l'aristocratique lettre bordée de noir."

Such a passage contains in little the whole history of a nation reflected in the magic mirror of a nation's country-side, equally desirable for its human suggestiveness and for its pure aesthetic worth.

And here we may pause a moment to consider one of the most important aspects of Proust's aesthetic impulse, which is expressed in the title *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, *The Remembrance of Things Past*. This is more than the expression of a desire to write an autobiography, to recapitulate one's own vanishing experience. It is an endeavour to reconstruct the whole of the past, on which the present is merely a not particularly valuable comment. Royalties are interesting because they have retired from business, aristocrats because they have nothing left but their manners; the *bourgeoisie* still carry with them the relics of their old servility, the people have not yet realized their power; and a social flux results therefrom, the study of which can never grow boring to the onlooker, as long as superficially the old order continues, though it represent nothing but an historic emotion. The hero, as he winds along the path of his emotional experience from childhood to adolescence, is pictured as avid for all these historic sensibilities, which find their expression in his early passion for the Guermantes group, the most aristocratic combination of families in France. From his earliest childhood he has dreamed about them, picturing them as their ancestors, whom he has seen in the stained-glass windows of his village church at Combray; till he has woven round them all the warm romance of the Middle Ages, the austere splendours of *Le Grand Siècle*, the brilliant decay of Eighteenth Century France. But when he meets them, the courage has gone, the intelligence has gone, and only the breeding remains. It was the greatest historical disillusion in the boy's life. Yet there still hangs about them the perfume of a vanished social order, and Proust makes splendid use of his hero's spiritual adventure. As he wanders through the *salons*, fast degenerating into drawing-rooms, he becomes the Saint-Simon of the *décadence*. For Proust can describe, with a mastery only second to that of Saint-Simon himself, the sense of social life, the reaction of an individual to a number of persons, and the interplay of a number of members of the same group upon each other. His capacity for describing the manifold pleasures of a party would have stirred the envy of the great author of Rome, Naples et Florence. Many people can only see snobbery in this heroic effort to project the past upon the screen of the present. Yet the author is too intelligent and honest not in the end to throw away his romantic spectacles. *Le Côté de Guermantes* cannot be permanently satisfying. Again bursts in the philosophy

of disillusion. When he has obtained with immense labour the key to the forbidden chamber, he finds nothing but stage properties inside.

But this poet of political, economic, and social institutions is also the pure poet of nature in another mood:

"Là, où je n'avais vu avec ma grand'mère au mois d'août que les feuilles et comme l'emplacement des pommiers, à perte de vue ils étaient en pleine floraison, d'un luxe inouï, les pieds dans la boue et en toilette de bal, ne prenant pas de précautions pour ne pas gâter le plus merveilleux satin rose qu'on eût jamais vu, et que faisait briller le soleil: l'horizon lointain de la mer fournissait aux pommiers comme un arrière-plan d'estampe japonaise; si je levais la tête pour regarder le ciel, entre les fleurs qui faisaient paraître son bleu rasséréné, presque violent, elles semblaient s'écarter pour montrer la profondeur de ce paradis. Sous cet azur, une brise légère, mais froide, faisait trembler légèrement les bouquets rougisants. Des mésanges bleues venaient se poser sur les branches et sautaient entre les fleurs indulgentes, comme si c'eût été un amateur d'exotisme et de couleurs, qui avait artificiellement créé cette beauté vivante. Mais elle touchait jusqu'aux larmes, parce que, si loin qu'on allât dans effets d'art raffiné, on sentait qu'elle était naturelle, que ces pommiers étaient là en pleine campagne comme les paysans, sur une grande route de France. Puis aux rayons du soleil succédèrent subitement ceux de la pluie; ils zébrèrent tout l'horizon, enserrèrent la file des pommiers dans leur réseau gris. Mais ceux-ci continuaient à dresser leur beauté, fleurie et rose, dans le vent devenu glacial sous l'averse qui tombait: c'était une journée de printemps."

But so wide-minded is this lyric poet who can speak with the voice of Claudel and of Fustel de Coulanges, that he is also perhaps the coldest analyst who has ever devoted his attention to fiction. His knife cuts down into the very souls of his patients, as he calls into play all the resources of his wit, animosities, sympathy, and intelligence. He is a master of all the smaller nuances of social relations, of all the half-whispered subterranean emotions, that bind Society together while Society barely dreams of their existence.

It is also worth remark that Proust is the first author to treat sexual inversion as a current and ordinary phenomenon, which he

describes neither in the vein of tedious panegyric, adopted by certain decadent writers, nor yet with the air of a showman displaying to an agitated tourist abysses of unfathomable horror. Treating this important social phenomenon as neither more nor less important than it is, he has derived from it new material for his study of social relations and has greatly enriched and complicated the texture of his plot. His extreme honesty meets nowhere with more triumphant reward. It is by the splendid use of so much unusual knowledge, that Proust gains his greatest victories as a pure novelist. Royalty, actresses, bourgeois, servants, peasants, men, women, and children—they all have the genuine third dimension and seem to the reader more real than their friends. The story is told of an English naval officer that he once knocked down a Frenchman for casting doubt on the chastity of Ophelia. It is to the credit of Shakespeare's supreme genius that our sympathies are with the naval officer, for Shakespeare's characters, too, are as real to us as our parents and friends and more real than our relations and our acquaintances. But to how few artists can this praise be given, save to Shakespeare and to Tolstoy! But to Proust it can be given in full measure. To read *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu* is to live in the world, at any rate in Proust's world, a world more sensitive, variegated, and interesting than our own. It is difficult to analyse the ultimate quality of an artist's triumph; yet such is the function of criticism, the sole justification of writing books about books.

Proust, it seems to me, had the extremely rare faculty of seeing his characters objectively and subjectively at the same moment. He can project himself so far into the mind of the persons he is describing, that he seems to know more about them than they can ever know themselves and the reader feels, in the process, that he never even dimly knew himself before. At the same time he never takes sides. The warm palpitating flesh he is creating is also and always a decorative figure on the huge design of his tapestry, just as in *Petroushka* the puppets are human beings and the human beings puppets. For Proust, though the most objective, is also the most personal of writers. As we get accustomed to the long, tortuous sentences, the huge elaboration of conscientious metaphor, the continual refining on what cannot be further refined, we insensibly become listeners to a long and brilliant conversation by the

wisest and wittiest of men. For Proust, as much as any man, has grafted the mellowness and also the exacerbation of experience on to the untiring inquisitiveness of youth. In a page of amazing prophecy, written as long ago as 1896, M Anatole France summed up the achievement of Proust at a moment when his life work had barely begun:

"Sans doute il est jeune. Il est jeune de la jeunesse de l'auteur. Mais il est vieux de la vieillesse du monde. C'est le printemps des feuilles sur les rameaux antiques, dans la forêt séculaire. On dirait que les pousses nouvelles sont attristées du passé profond des bois et portent le deuil de tant de printemps morts. . . . Il y a en lui du Bernardin de Saint Pierre dépravé et du Pétrone ingénu."

This is not the moment to pretend to estimate impartially his exact place and achievement in letters. For the present we can only feel his death, almost personally, so much has he woven himself into the hearts of his readers, and apply to him in all sincerity the words Diderot used of his predecessor in time:

"Plus on a l'âme belle, plus on a le goût exquis et pur, plus on connaît la nature, plus on aime la vérité, plus on estime les ouvrages de Proust."

PLENIPOTENTIARY

BY TINA MODOTTI DE RICHEY

I like to swing from the sky
And drop down on Europe,
Bounce up again like a rubber ball,
Reach a hand down on the roof of the Kremlin,
Steal a tile
And throw it to the kaiser.
Be good;
I will divide the moon in three parts,
The biggest will be yours.
Don't eat it too fast.



ROGER FRY. BY BOARDMAN ROBINSON

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THE HERETIC OF SOANA

BY GERHART HAUPTMANN

Translated from the German by Bayard Quincy Morgan

II

THE uncouth mountain herder was breathing hard, not only because he had traversed in a short time the distance from a remote, more elevated alp, after he had observed from there the priest's arrival, but because this visit was an event for the outlawed man.

The greeting was short. Francesco was compelled by his host to sit down, after the latter had, with his rough hands, cleared the soapstone bench of the stones and cowslips which served his accursed brood as playthings.

The mountain herder stirred the fire and blew upon it with puffed cheeks, so that his feverish eyes gleamed still more wildly in the reflected light. He nursed the flame with logs and dry brushwood, until the pungent smoke was enough to drive out the priest. The herdsman was obsequious and submissive; he acted with a nervous eagerness, much as if everything now depended on not losing by some wrong move the favour of the higher being that had entered his poor dwelling. He brought out a great pail full of milk, which was covered with a thick layer of cream, but was unfortunately fouled in such an incredible fashion that for this reason alone, Francesco was unable to touch it. But although he had become hungry, he also declined to taste any fresh cheese and clean bread, because he had a superstitious fear of committing a sin by eating it. Finally, when the mountaineer had somewhat composed himself, and was standing facing him with fearful, expectant eyes and limp arms, the priest began speaking:

"Luchino Scarabota, you are not to be deprived of the consolation of our holy Church, and your children shall hereafter not be cast out of the community of Catholic Christians, if it turns out, on the one hand, that the evil rumours touching you are untrue, or if

you honestly confess, show penitence and contrition, and are prepared with God's aid to remove the stumbling block. Therefore, first open your heart to me, Scarabota; confess freely in what respect you are calumniated, and confess with honest truth the guilt which is burdening you."

After this speech the herdsman was silent. Only a brief wild sound was suddenly wrung from his throat; it betrayed no feeling, however, but had rather a gurgling, bird-like quality. With the fluency of familiarity, Francesco at once proceeded to hold up before the sinner the terrible consequences of impenitence, and the propitiatory goodness and love of God the Father, which he had proved through the sacrifice of his only Son, the sacrifice of the Lamb which took the sins of the world upon itself. Through Jesus Christ, he concluded, any sin can be forgiven, provided that an unreserved confession, combined with remorse and prayer, has proved to our Heavenly Father the contrition of the miserable sinner.

The priest had waited a long time and with a shrug of the shoulders was rising as though he intended to leave; then finally the herder began to choke out an incomprehensible tangle of words: a sort of guzzling like that of a disgorging hawk. And with straining attention the priest attempted to seize upon as much as was comprehensible in the chaos. But what he could understand seemed to him quite as strange and remarkable as what was obscure. Only this much became clear from the alarming and oppressive quantity of imaginary things: that Luchino Scarabota wished to secure his aid against all kinds of devils which lived in the mountains and harassed him.

It would ill have become the credulous young priest to doubt the existence and activity of evil spirits. Was not the creation filled with all manner and degree of angels fallen from the train of Lucifer, the rebel whom God had cast out? Yet here he shuddered, although he did not know whether it was at the unheard-of spiritual darkness and superstition he met with, or at the hopeless blindness caused by ignorance. He resolved to ask some questions, in order to form a judgement as to his parishioner's range of ideas, and the power of his understanding.

Then it soon became evident that this wild, neglected man knew nothing of God, still less of Jesus Christ the Saviour, and least of all about the existence of a Holy Ghost. On the other hand, it

began to seem as if he felt himself surrounded by demons and were possessed by a gloomy persecution mania. And in the priest he did not see the chosen servant of God at all, but much rather a mighty sorcerer, or God himself. What could Francesco do but cross himself, while the herder humbly threw himself on the ground, and with moist, protuberant lips began to lick his shoes like an idolater, and to cover them with kisses.

The young priest had never found himself in a similar situation. The rarefied mountain air, the spring, the separation from the usual level of civilization, all this had the effect of befogging his consciousness somewhat. Something like a visionary spell entered the sphere of his soul, where reality was dissolving into unstable, airy forms. This alteration was combined with a faint fearfulness, which suggested to him more than once a precipitate flight down into the realm of consecrated churches and chimes. The Devil was powerful: who could know how many ways and means he had of luring onward the most unsuspecting, most faithful Christian, and hurling him down from the brink of a giddy height into the abyss.

Francesco had not been taught that the idols of the heathen were nothing but empty creations of the imagination. The Church expressly recognized their power, only that it represented it as one hostile to God. They were still fighting with almighty God, though hopelessly, for the world. Hence the pale young priest was not a little startled when his host fetched a wooden article out of some nook in his dwelling, a horrible carving which probably was a fetish. Despite his priestly terror of the lascivious object, Francesco could not refrain from taking a closer look at it. With abhorrence and astonishment he confessed to himself that the most revolting heathenish abominations, namely the rural worship of Priapus, were still active here. Nothing but Priapus, it was clearly evident, could be represented by this primitive religious emblem.

Scarcely had Francesco seized the harmless little god of procreation, the god of rural fertility, who was so openly accorded high honour by the ancients, when the strange constriction of his soul turned into holy wrath. Without stopping to think, he flung the obscene little alruna into the fire; but rushing forward as swiftly as a dog, the herder drew it out again in the same instant. It was glowing in spots, and in other spots it was flaming; but the rough hands of the pagan immediately restored it to its previous harmless con-

dition. But now, along with its deliverer, it had to undergo a torrent of castigating words.

Luchino Scarabota did not seem to know which of the two gods he should regard as the stronger: the wooden one or the one of flesh and blood. However, he kept his eyes, in which horror and terror were mingled with spiteful rage, fixed on the new deity, whose atrocious daring did not, at any rate, point to any sense of weakness. Once started, the emissary of the one and only God did not allow himself to be intimidated in his sacred zeal by the glances, threatening as they were, of the benighted idolater. And without any ceremony he now came to speak of the heinous sin from which, as everyone said, the numerous progeny of the mountaineer had sprung.

Into the young priest's loud words burst, as it were, the sister of Scarabota; but without saying anything, and merely eyeing the zealot in secret, she busied herself here and there in the cavern. She was a pale and repulsive woman, to whom washing seemed to be a thing unknown. One had disagreeable glimpses of her naked body through the rents of her neglected clothing.

When the priest had finished and had temporarily exhausted his store of stinging accusations, the woman sent her brother out into the open with a short, barely audible word. Without objecting, the savage disappeared, like an obedient hound. Then the filth-crusted sinner, whose matted black hair hung down over her broad hips, kissed the priest's hand, and said, "Praised be Jesus Christ!"

Immediately afterwards she burst into tears.

She said the priest was quite right to condemn her with harsh words. She had indeed sinned against the word of God, though not at all in the way indicated by the calumnies told about her. She alone was the sinner; her brother, however, was wholly innocent. She swore, and by all the saints, that she had never been guilty of that frightful iniquity she was accused of: incest. To be sure she had lived unchastely, and as she was now confessing, she was ready to describe the fathers of her children, if not to call them all by name. For she knew very few of the names, since need had often caused her to sell her favours, she said, to passing strangers.

For the rest, she had brought her children into the world painfully and without any help, and she had had to bury some of them shortly after their birth, here and there in the débris of Monte

Generoso. Whether he could give her absolution or not, she knew nevertheless that God had forgiven her, for she had done penance enough through privations, cares, and suffering.

Francesco could not but regard the tearful confession of the woman as a tissue of lies, at least so far as the incest was concerned. To be sure, he felt that there were actions which it is absolutely repugnant to confess before men, and which God alone learns in the solitary stillness of prayer. He respected this reserve in the degenerate woman, and could not conceal from himself that in many respects she was of a higher type than her brother. It was she, as it turned out, who had sent the man to Francesco. She had seen the pale young priest when she went to market one day at Lugano, where she sold the products of her mountain farm; and at sight of him she had taken courage, and had conceived the idea of recommending her outlawed children to his mercy. She alone was the head of the family, and cared for her brother and her children.

"I will not discuss," said Francesco, "how far you are guilty or innocent. One thing is certain: if you do not wish your children to grow up like beasts, you must separate from your brother. As long as you live with him, the frightful reputation you have can never be lived down. People will always assume that you have committed that terrible sin."

After these words, obstinacy and defiance seemed to become dominant in the woman. At any rate, she made no answer; and for a long while, as if no stranger were present, she devoted herself to her household duties. Meanwhile a girl of about fifteen came in, drove some goats into the opening of the stable, and then participated in the woman's activities, also as if Francesco were not there. The young priest knew at once, as soon as he merely glimpsed the girl's shadow gliding through the depths of the cave, that she must be of uncommon beauty. He crossed himself, for he felt in his body a faint dread of an inexplicable kind. He did not know whether he should resume his admonitions in the presence of the youthful shepherdess. To be sure, there could be no doubt that she was depraved to the core, since Satan had called her to life by way of the blackest sin; but still there might be a remnant of purity left in her, and who could know whether she had any idea of her black origin?

Her movements, at any rate, displayed a great calmness, from which one could certainly not conclude that she had an uneasy mind

or a load on her conscience. On the contrary, everything about her was of a modest self-assurance, which was not affected by the presence of the pastor. She had so far not cast a glance at Francesco, at least not so that he had met her eye or otherwise caught her looking at him. Indeed, while he himself was secretly watching her through his glasses, he had to cast more and more doubt on the supposition that a child of sin, a child of such parents, could really be so formed. At last she vanished up a ladder into a sort of attic, so that Francesco could now continue his laborious pastoral work.

"I cannot leave my brother," said the woman, "and for the very simple reason that he is helpless without me. He can write his name after a fashion, and I taught him that only with the greatest difficulty. He does not know coins, and he is afraid of the railroad, the city, and people. If I go away, he will pursue me as a wretched dog pursues his lost master. He will either find me or perish miserably; and then what is to become of the children and our property? If I stay here with the children, then I'd like to see the man who could succeed in getting my brother away: unless they should put him in chains and lock him up in Milan behind iron bars."

The priest said, "That may yet come to pass, if you will not take my good advice."

Then the woman's fears turned into rage. She had sent her brother to Francesco so that he might take pity on them, but not to have him make them unhappy. In that case she had certainly rather go on living as hitherto, hated and cast out by the people down below. She was a good Catholic, but if the Church cast out a man, he had a right to sell himself to the Devil. And what she had not yet done, the great sin with which she was charged, she might then actually commit.

Intermingled with the smothered words of the woman, and her sudden outcries, Francesco kept hearing from above, from the direction in which the girl had disappeared, a sweet singing, at times like the softest breathing, at times increasing in power; so that his soul was more under the spell of this melody than intent upon the furious outbursts of the woman. And a hot wave rose up in him, combined with a kind of anxiety which he had never felt before. The smoky hole of this animal-human dwelling-stable seemed to be transformed, as by enchantment, into the loveliest of all the crystalline grottoes of Dante's Paradise—full of angel-voices and the flutter of pinions that sounded like those of the laughing-dove.

He went. It was impossible for him to withstand any longer, without trembling visibly, such confusing influences. Outside, coming out in front of the excavated stone-pile, he inhaled the freshness of the mountain air and was immediately filled, like an empty vessel, with the titanic impression of the mountain-world. His soul became transferred, as it were, into the farthest ranges of his eyesight, and consisted of the colossal masses of the earth's crust, from distant, snowy peaks to near-by, terrible abysses, under the royal brightness of the spring day. Still he saw the brown ospreys describing their unconscious circles above the sugar-loaf of St Agatha. Then he hit upon the idea of holding a secret service for the outlawed family up there; and he laid this plan before the woman, as she stepped dejectedly upon the threshold of the cave, where the dandelions were clustered. "You can't dare come to Soana, as you yourself know," he said; "and if I should invite you there, it would be a grave mistake for both of us."

Again the woman was moved to tears, and promised to appear before the chapel of St Agatha on a certain day, with her brother and the older children.

When the young priest had gone far enough away from the vicinity of the dwelling-place of Luchino Scarabota and his curse-laden family so that he could no longer be seen from there, he chose a sun-warmed boulder to rest on, while he thought over what he had just experienced. He told himself that he had ascended there with a thrill of interest, to be sure, but yet with a dutifully sober mind and without any foretaste of what was now disquieting him in such an ominous manner. What was it? He smoothed, brushed, and picked at his cassock for a long time, as if that would enable him to extract the secret.

When some time had elapsed and he had not yet felt the desired enlightenment, he took his breviary from his pocket as usual; but even though he began immediately reading aloud, it did not free him from a peculiar kind of irresoluteness. He felt as if he had forgotten to do something, some important part of his mission. From behind his glasses he turned his eyes again and again toward the road with a certain expectancy, and could not summon up courage to continue the descent he had begun.

So he fell into a strange reverie from which he was awakened by two small incidents, which, to his overwrought imagination, took on

an exaggerated importance. First, his right-hand lens cracked under the influence of the cold mountain air; and almost immediately afterward he heard a fearful sneeze above his head, and felt a heavy pressure on his shoulders.

The young priest sprang up. He laughed loudly when he recognized as the cause of his panic a spotted he-goat, which had given him a proof of its unlimited confidence by resting its fore-hoofs on his shoulders, without any regard for his clerical garb.

But this was only the beginning of its most obtrusive familiarity. The shaggy buck with his strong, finely curved horns and his flashing eyes was accustomed, it seemed, to beg of passing mountain-climbers; and he did this in such a droll, resolute, and irresistible fashion that one could not get rid of him except by running away. Again and again, rearing in the air, he set his hoofs on Francesco's breast, and seemed determined, after the harassed priest had submitted to having his pockets sniffed at, and after some bread-crumbs had been consumed with ravenous greed, to nibble at the priest's hair, nose, and fingers.

An old bearded she-goat, with bell and udder touching the ground, had followed the highwayman; and, encouraged by him, she also began to worry the priest. The breviary with its gilt-edges and cross had made a particular impression upon her; and she succeeded, while Francesco was occupied with repelling a curving buck's horn, in getting possession of the little book. Taking its black-printed leaves for green ones, she followed the prescription of the prophet and feasted literally and greedily upon the sacred verities.

The annoyances were increased by the arrival of other animals which had been scattered about, grazing; then of a sudden the shepherdess appeared as his rescuer. It was the very same girl that Francesco had first caught a glimpse of in Luchino's hut. After she had driven off the goats, the strong, slender girl stood before him with freshly reddened cheeks and laughing eyes; he said, "You have saved me, my good child." And he added with a laugh of his own, as he received his breviary from the hands of young Eve, "It is really queer that in spite of my pastoral office I am so helpless against your flock."

A priest may not converse with a young girl or woman longer than his ecclesiastical duties require; and the parish remarks on it at once if he is seen in such a *tête-à-tête* outside the church. So,

mindful of his stern calling, Francesco continued his journey home without much delay; and yet he had the feeling that he had detected himself in a sin, and must purify himself at the next opportunity by remorse and penance.

What Francesco had experienced on this official errand, as a whole and in detail, was not worth talking about if one does not take into consideration the abominations that had their breeding-place in the hut of the miserable Scarabotas. But the young priest felt at once that this mountain trip had become an event of great significance in his life, even though he was for the moment far from realizing the entire scope of that significance. He could trace a transformation that, working from within him, had taken place in his being. He found himself in a new state which seemed queerer to him every minute, and somewhat suspicious, but yet nowhere nearly so suspicious that he would have scented Satan as being back of it, or perhaps have thrown an ink-pot at him even if he had had one in his pocket. The mountain world lay below him like a paradise. For the very first time, with involuntarily folded hands, he congratulated himself on having been entrusted by his superiors with the administration of just this parish. Compared with this delicious height and depth, what was Peter's vessel which came down from Heaven with three angels holding the corners? Where was there a greater majesty, from man's point of view, than these inaccessible crags of Monte Generoso, on which ever and again the dull springtime thunder of melting snow was audible in an avalanche?

From the day of his visit to the outlaws, Francesco to his own astonishment could no longer find his way back to the thoughtless peace of his former existence. The new aspect which nature had assumed for him did not fade away again; and she would not permit herself to be driven back in any way into her former inanimate state. The manner of her influences, by which the priest was oppressed not only day by day, but also in his dreams, he called and recognized at first as temptations. And as the faith of the church has been fused with pagan superstition, just by the fact of having struggled against it, hence Francesco attributed his transformation in all seriousness to the touching of that wooden object, that little alruna which the shaggy herdsman had rescued from the fire. Undoubtedly, there had still remained active a remnant of those

abominations which the ancients revered under the name of phallic worship, that shameful cult which had been laid low in the world by the holy war of the cross of Jesus. . . . Up to the time when he had set eyes on the disgusting object, the cross alone had been burned into Francesco's soul. They had branded him, just exactly as they brand the sheep of a flock with a red-hot die, with the stigma of the cross; and this stigma had become, present alike in waking and in dreaming, the symbol of his own essence. Now the accursed and embodied Devil was looking down over the cross-piece of the cross, and that most unclean, horrible satyr-symbol was usurping more and more, in constant conflict, the place of the cross.

Francesco had reported to his bishop, as well as to the burgo-master, on the success of his pastoral visit; and the answer which he received from him was an approval of his procedure. "Above all," wrote the bishop, "let us avoid any open scandal." He found it extremely shrewd that Francesco had appointed a special and secret service for the poor sinners at St Agatha, in the chapel of the Holy Mother Mary. But the approval of his superior could not restore the peace of Francesco's soul; he could not get rid of the idea that he had come back from up there with a kind of enchantment fastened upon him.

In Ligornetto, where Francesco was born, and where his uncle the famous sculptor had spent the last ten years of his life, there still lived the same old pastor who had initiated him as a boy into the saving truths of the Catholic faith, and had pointed out to him the paths of grace. This old priest he sought out one day, after he had walked the road from Soana to Ligornetto in about three hours. The old priest bade him welcome, and was visibly touched as he consented to hear the confession which the young man wished to make to him. Of course he absolved him.

Francesco's pangs of conscience are substantially expressed in the revelation which he made to the old man. He said, "Since I was in the home of the wretched sinners on the alp of Soana, I find myself in a kind of obsession. I shudder. I feel as if I had not only put on another coat, but actually another skin. When I hear the waterfall of Soana roaring, then I should like best to climb down into the deep gorge and place myself under the falling masses of water, for hours at a time, so as to become pure and healthy, as it were, inside and out. When I see the cross in the church, the cross

over my bed, I laugh. I cannot weep as I used to when picturing to myself the agony of the Saviour. Instead my eyes are attracted by all sorts of objects like the alruna of Luchino Scarabota. Sometimes they are quite unlike it, too, and I see a resemblance just the same. In order to study, in order to bury myself deep in the study of the Church Fathers, I had curtains put up over the windows of my little room. Now I have had them taken away. The singing of the birds, the roaring of the many brooks through the meadows past my house after the melting of the snow, yes, even the scent of the narcissus used to disturb me. Now I open my double windows wide, and enjoy it all with veritable greediness.

"All this alarms me," Francesco had continued, "but there is worse yet. As if by black magic, I have got into the power of unclean devils. Their tickling and prickling, their impudent prodding and provocation to sin, at every hour of the day and night, is terrible. I open the window, and through their sorcery the song of the birds in the blossoming cherry-tree under my window seems to me to teem with unchastity. Certain shapes in the bark of trees, and even certain lines of the mountains, remind me of the parts of the *corpus femininum*. All nature—I tell you with horror—sometimes thunders in my frightened ears one monstrous phallic song, whereby, as I am forced to believe despite all my reluctance, it worships the miserable little wooden idol of the herder.

"All this of course increases my unrest," Francesco had proceeded; "the more so because I recognize it as my duty to march to battle against that pestilential herd up there on the alp. Worse still, even in the duties most inseparable from my calling there is mingled, with an almost devilish sweetness, an all-perplexing, intoxicating poison. Once I was moved to pure and holy zeal by the words of Jesus, where he tells of the lost sheep and the shepherd who forsakes his flock in order to bring it back from the inaccessible cliffs. But now I doubt whether this zeal of mine is as pure as I once thought it. I awake at night, my face bathed in tears, and everything within me is dissolved into sobbing compassion for the lost souls, up yonder. But when I say 'lost souls'—and here I must be honest—the sinful souls of Scarabota and his sister are represented in my mind's eye plainly and simply by the fruit of their sin: their daughter.

"Now I wonder whether unlawful desire for her is not the cause

of my eagerness, and whether I am doing aright and not running the risk of eternal death, in continuing my apparently pious work."

Serious, but smiling at times, the old, experienced priest had listened to the pedantic confession of the youth. This was the Francesco he knew, with his conscientious love of rectitude, and his craving for scrupulous accuracy. He said, "Francesco, be not afraid. Keep to the path you have always trodden. It must not surprise you if the machinations of the evil enemy seem most powerful and dangerous just at the time when you are proceeding to rob him of victims that he already thought were safe, so to speak."

In a mood of relief Francesco stepped out of the parsonage into the street of the village of Ligornetto, in which he had spent his early youth. It is a little place, situated on a rather flat and broad valley-floor and surrounded by fruitful fields, upon which, over the heads of vegetables and grain-stalks, the grape-vines are entwined back and forth from mulberry to mulberry like firmly twisted dark ropes. This locality is also dominated by the mighty crags of Monte Generoso, the west side of which here rises majestically from its base.

It was about midday, and Ligornetto was drowsy. Francesco was barely greeted on his way by a few cackling chickens, some children at play, and at the end of the village by a yelping dog. Here, at the end of the village, the residence of his uncle closed the street like a door. It had been erected by a man of considerable means, and was once the Buen Retiro of Vincenzo the sculptor. It was now uninhabited, and in the possession of the canton of Ticino as a sort of memorial endowment. Francesco walked up the steps of the forsaken garden, where he yielded to a sudden desire to revisit for once the interior of the house. A neighbouring farmer, who was an old acquaintance, handed the key over to him.

The young priest's relations with the fine arts were the traditional ones of his rank. His famous uncle had been dead for about ten years, and since the day of his burial Francesco had not been inside the celebrated artist's home. He could not have said what suddenly moved him to visit the empty house, which he had hitherto regarded only in passing and with fleeting interest. His uncle had never been more to him than a dignitary, whose sphere of activity was an alien, meaningless thing.

When Francesco had turned the key in the lock and stepped

into the vestibule through the door that creaked on its rusty hinges, a faint shudder passed through him at the dust-laden stillness wafted toward him down the stairs from all sides out of open doors. Just to the right of the hall was a domed rotunda, several stories high, and lighted from above. Vincenzo had worked here with modelling tool and chisel, and the plaster casts of his best works filled this almost churchly room, a crowded and mute assemblage.

Oppressed, even alarmed, and starting at the echo of his own footsteps, with a bad conscience as it were, Francesco had got this far and now proceeded, really for the first time, to study this or that work of his uncle's. There was Ghiberti to be seen beside Michael Angelo. Dante was there too. They were covered with systems of dots, the models having been executed on a larger scale in marble. But these world-famed figures could not hold the attention of the young priest for long. Near them were the statues of three young girls, the daughters of a marquis, who had been sufficiently open-minded to let the master portray them in the nude. From all appearances, the youngest of the young ladies was not over twelve, the second not over fifteen, the third not over seventeen years old. Francesco came to himself only after he had surveyed the slender bodies for a long time in utter self-forgetfulness. These works did not display their nudity, like those of the Greeks, as a natural nobility and image of the deity, but one felt it as an indiscretion of the bedroom. In the first place, the copy of the originals had not been dissociated from them as persons, and had remained fully recognizable as such; and these originals seemed to say: we have been indecently exposed and disrobed by brutal decree, contrary to our will and our sense of shame. When Francesco awoke from his absorption, his heart was pounding, and he looked fearfully in all directions. He was doing nothing wrong, but he felt it was a sin even to be alone with such creations.

He resolved to depart as quickly as possible, lest he be actually caught there. Yet when he had again reached the house-door, he dropped the latch into the lock from the inside, instead of going away, and turned the key, so that he was now locked into the ghostly house of the dead man and could no longer be surprised by anybody. This done, he resumed his station before that scandal in plaster, the three graces.

His heart began to beat more violently, and a pale and fearful

madness came over him. He felt impelled to stroke the hair of the oldest marchioness, as if she were living. Although this action plainly, and in his own judgement, bordered on madness, yet it was still a priestly one to a certain extent. But the second marchioness had to suffer more: a stroking of shoulder and arm—a round shoulder and a round arm, which ended in a soft and delicate hand. Soon Francesco had become a disconcerted, perplexed, and penitent sinner, who was in no better frame of mind than Adam when he heard the voice of the Lord after he had eaten of the apple of knowledge. He fled. He ran away as if hunted.

The following days Francesco spent partly in the church praying, partly in his parsonage chastising himself. His penitence and his remorse were deep. By a fervour of worship such as he had not known hitherto, he might hope to be victor in the end over the temptations of the flesh. Yet the struggle between the good and evil principle had burst out in his breast with undreamed-of frightfulness, so that it seemed to him that God and the Devil had for the first time transferred their battle-ground to his breast. Even the strictly irresponsible part of his existence, sleep, no longer offered the young cleric any peace: for just that unguarded season of human repose seemed especially favourable to Satan for setting up seductive and pernicious delusions in the innocent soul of the young man. One night, toward morning, he knew not whether it had happened while sleeping or waking, he saw in the white light of the moon the three white figures, lovely daughters of the marquis, enter his room and approach his bed; and on looking closer he perceived that each one coalesced in magic fashion with the image of the young shepherdess on the alp of Santa Croce.

There was no doubt that from the little toy dwelling of Scarabota down into the room of the priest, into which the alp could look through the window, a connexion had been established whose thread was not spun by angels. Francesco knew enough of the heavenly hierarchy, as of the hellish one, to recognize at once where this work took its origin. Experienced in many a branch of scholastic science, he assumed that evil demons, in order to exert certain pernicious influences, make use of the stars. He had learned that with respect to his body man belonged among the celestial spheres, that his reason made him the equal of the angels, that his will was

subordinated to God, but that God permitted fallen angels to direct his will away from God, and that the realm of the demons was increased by alliance with such already perverted beings. Moreover, a temporary physical emotion, when exploited by the hellish spirits, could often be the cause of a man's eternal damnation. In short, the young priest quivered to the marrow of his bones in fear of the poisonous sting of the *diaboli*, the demons that reek of blood, of the bestial Behemoth, and most especially of Asmodeus, the well-known demon of whoring.

He could not at first decide to presuppose in the accursed incestuous couple the sin of witchcraft and sorcery. To be sure, he had one experience which seemed to him gravely suspicious. Every day he undertook with holy zeal and all the resources of religion a purification of his soul, in order to cleanse it of the image of the shepherd-girl; and again and again she stood there more clearly, firmly, and plainly than before. What sort of a painting, what sort of an indestructible panel of wood or canvas could it be on which one could not make the slightest impression either by water or fire?

The continual intrusion of this image became the object of his quiet and astounded observation. He would read a book, and when he saw on a page the soft countenance, framed in its peculiarly reddish earth-brown hair and gazing with wide dark eyes, he would cover it with a leaf previously inserted. But it passed through every leaf as if none were there, just as it made its way through curtains, doors, and walls, both in the house and in church.

Amid such anxieties the young priest almost died of impatience, for the appointed date of the special service on the peak of St Agatha would not come soon enough. He wished to do the duty he had undertaken as quickly as possible, because he might perhaps in that way wrest the girl from the talons of the prince of hell. He wished still more to see the girl again, but what he desired most was his liberation, which he confidently expected, from his torturing enchantment. Francesco ate little, spent the greater part of his nights in wakefulness, and, becoming daily more haggard and pale, was more than ever invested by his parish with the odour of an exemplary piety.

The morning had come at last on which the pastor had his appointment with the poor sinners in the chapel that stood high up

on the sugar-loaf of St Agatha. The extremely arduous path to the chapel could not be traversed in less than two hours. At nine o'clock Francesco stepped out into the square of Soana, ready for the trip, with his heart cheered and refreshed, and surveying the world with new-born eyes. It was nearing the first of May; nothing more delicious could be imagined than this day which was just beginning. But the young man had often lived through days of equal beauty before this, yet without feeling, as he did to-day, as if nature were the very Garden of Eden. To-day he was in the midst of Paradise.

Women and girls were standing as usual about the sarcophagus, with its flow of clear mountain-water; they greeted the priest with loud cries. Something in his bearing and his mien, as well as the holiday freshness of the young day, had given the laundresses courage. With skirts wedged between their legs, so that in some cases their brown calves and knees were visible, they stood bending over, working stoutly with their equally brown, powerful bare arms. Francesco stepped up to the group. He felt induced to say all kinds of friendly things that in no case bore any relation to his pastoral office, and that dealt with good weather, good spirits, and the hope of a good wine-crop. For the first time, probably stimulated by his visit to the house of his uncle the sculptor, the young priest condescended to inspect the ornamental frieze on the sarcophagus; it consisted of a bacchanalian procession, and showed prancing satyrs, dancing female flutists, and the tiger-drawn chariot of Dionysus, the grape-crowned god of wine. At this moment it did not seem strange to him that the ancients had covered the stone vestment of death with the figures of effervescing life. The women and girls, among whom there were some of unusual beauty, chattered and laughed into the sarcophagus during this inspection, and at times it seemed to him that he himself was surrounded by shouting, intoxicated maenads.

His first ascent into the mountain-world was like that of a man with open eyes, and his second like that of one who had been blind from the womb. Francesco felt with compelling clearness that he had suddenly had his eyes opened. In this respect the inspection of the sarcophagus seemed to him not an accident at all, but deeply significant. Where was the dead man? Living water of life filled the open stone and coffin, and the eternal resurrection was

portrayed in the language of the ancients on the surface of the marble. Thus was the gospel to be understood.

To be sure, this was a gospel which had little in common with that which he had previously learned and taught. It derived by no means from a book, but rather came welling up out of the earth, through grass, plants, and flowers, or floating down with the light from the centre of the sun. All nature seemed to be animated and eloquent. Formerly dead and mute, she became active, confiding, frank, and communicative. Suddenly she seemed to be telling the young priest everything that she had hitherto concealed. He seemed to be her favourite, her chosen one, her son, whom she was initiating, like a mother, into the holy secrets of her love and motherhood. All the abysses of terror, all the anxieties of his startled soul, were no more. Nothing remained of all the thick darkness, all the fears, of the supposed assaults of hell. All nature radiated goodness and love, and Francesco, overflowing with goodness and love, was able to requite her.

Strange: as he laboriously clambered upwards through broom, dwarf beech, and blackberry-vines, often slipping on sharp-edged stones, the spring morning invested him like a symphony of nature, as mighty as it was blissful, which spoke more of creating than of the creation. He saw revealed the mystery of a creative labour that was for ever exempt from death. Whoso did not hear that symphony, so it seemed to the priest, deceived himself when he presumed to join the Psalmist in his songs of praise: "*jubilare Deo omnis terra*" or "*benedicite coeli domino*."

Without weariness the priest had arrived at the summit of the conical mountain, which was scarcely broader than the tiny house of God that stood there. It also supplied space for a narrow ledge and a cramped little fore-court, the middle of which was occupied by a young, still leafless chestnut-tree. A fragment of the sky or of Mary's blue robe seemed to be strewn about the little chapel in the wilds, the blue gentians had spread so thickly about the sanctuary. Or one might even have imagined that the tip of the mountain had simply been immersed in the blue of the sky.

The choir-boy and the two Scarabotas were already there and had made themselves comfortable under the chestnut-tree. Francesco grew pale, for his eyes had searched in vain, though but hastily, for the young shepherdess. But he put on a stern countenance and

opened the door of the chapel with a large rusty key, without giving any sign of the disappointment and the struggle of his dismayed soul. He entered the diminutive church, in which the choir-boy then made some preparations behind the altar for the celebration of the mass. From a bottle he had brought, some holy water was poured into the dried-up font, into which the two Scarabotas could dip their hard and sinful fingers. They sprinkled and crossed themselves, and dropped on their knees in timid awe close by the threshold.

Meanwhile Francesco, driven by agitation, went out once more into the open. With a sudden profound and silent emotion, after walking about a little, he found the girl he sought; she was somewhat below the topmost platform, resting upon a starry sky of brilliant blue gentians. "Come in, I am waiting for you," called the priest. She arose with seeming indolence, and looked at him with quiet glance from under lowered lashes. At the same time she seemed to be smiling in lovely gentleness; this, however, was merely caused by the natural formation of her sweet mouth, the lovely light of her blue eyes, and the delicate dimples of the rounded cheeks.

At this moment the devastating image which Francesco had cherished in his soul was completely reconstructed. He saw an innocent childlike Madonna-face, whose distracting charm involved a very slight, painful acerbity. The rather striking redness of the cheeks rested upon a white skin, from which the moist redness of the lips shone out with the glow of a pomegranate. Every strain in the music of this childlike head was at once sweetness and bitterness, melancholy and gaiety. There was a shyness, a reticence in her glance, and at the same time a tender challenge: with none of the violence of animal passions, but unconscious, flower-like. If the eyes seemed to hold within them the riddle and the fairy-tale of the flower, the whole appearance of the girl resembled rather a beautiful ripe fruit. This face, as Francesco's inner eye saw with astonishment, still belonged to an utter child as far as the soul found expression in it; only a certain swelling roundness, like that of the grape, pointed to the overstepped boundary of childhood and to the attainment of woman's destiny. Her hair, partly earth-coloured, partly crossed by lighter strands, was wound into a heavy coil about temples and brow. Some trace of a heavy, inwardly

fermenting, choice and ripe slumberousness seemed to pull the girl's lashes downward, and gave to her eyes a certain moist, over-urgent tenderness. But the music in her face changed below her ivory neck; external notes expressed a different meaning. With her shoulders the woman in her began: a woman of a youthful, yet mature stature that almost inclined to overweight, and did not seem to belong to the childlike head. The naked feet and strong tanned legs bore a fruitful plumpness which the priest thought was almost too heavy for them. The head possessed the sensuously ardent mystery of its Isis-like body unconsciously, or at most faintly suspected. But for that very reason Francesco realized that he was irretrievably and for ever at the mercy of that head and that irresistible body.

But whatever the youth perceived, realized, and felt at the moment he once more looked upon that creature of God, so heavily burdened with a heritage of sin, one could detect nothing of it in his looks, except that his lips quivered a little. "What is your name?" he merely asked of the sin-laden innocent. The shepherdess called herself Agata, and did so with a voice that seemed to Francesco like the cooing of a heavenly laughing-dove. "Can you read and write?" he asked. She answered, "No." "Do you know anything about the significance of the holy office of the Mass?" She looked at him and made no reply. Then he bade her enter the little church, and he himself entered ahead of her. Behind the altar the choir-boy helped him into his vestments; Francesco placed the cap on his head, and the holy service could begin: never had the young man felt himself so full of a solemn fervour as on this occasion.

And while he stood there with the elevated sacrament, an eternity in his estimation, in reality two or three seconds, it seemed to him as if the sugar-loaf of St Agatha were covered from top to bottom with listening angels, saints, and apostles. But almost more glorious seemed to him a hollow drum-beat and a line of beautifully dressed women, who, linked together with garlands of flowers and clearly visible through the walls, danced around the little chapel. Behind them were whirling in ecstatic frenzy the maenads of the sarcophagus, the goat-footed Satyrs danced and pranced while some were carrying in merry procession Luchino Scarabota's wooden symbol of fruitfulness.

To be concluded

TWO POEMS

BY MALCOLM COWLEY

THE FISHES

From the bulk of it
from summer fields pegged flat beneath the sky
from enormous sunlight beating down on them
I hid myself away
under the water, under green water
where silver fishes nibbled at my thighs
saying
—We swam upstream for three days and three nights
we drifted three days southward with the current
and nowhere found a limit to the world.
It is shaped like a willow branch. No one can swim
to its tip.

The fishes hid away beneath a stone.

STARLINGS

Starlings wheel and descend at nightfall, choosing maybe a bamboo
copse or a cedar of Lebanon. They cross the face of the winter
sun like a smoke.

A cloud of descending starlings: it takes the successive postures of
a ball, a cane, a mandolin (or rather a guitar) a string of
frankfurters, a candy-poke, finally a balloon which collapses
with a rush of escaping gases.

Out of the centre of a cloud is heard the twittering of birds.



A WOODCUT. BY ROGER FRY



A WOODCUT. BY ROGER FRY



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ITALIAN LETTER

Naples

April, 1923

SINCE my visit to La Verna and to Papini, Italy has gone through a clamorous political upheaval, and many things which at the time were still affecting a semblance of solidity, have now quietly dissolved into thin air. Other shapes, other images, other idols, after a violent incubation, have taken their place, and are bent on sucking the blood of reality with concentrated eagerness. I thank my private, personal God, who has not assigned the lot of a political correspondent to me: I am not thereby forced to cut the Gordian knot of my perplexities, and to anticipate the judgement of posterity on the swift shadows weaving their intricate webs against the walls of my cavern.

But certain aspects of the visible drama, certain words and gestures of the protagonists, seem to point insistently to an inner meaning, to a spiritual design, to a soul within the body. There is a passionate desire to recapture the obsolete forms of religion, to fix one's ideals as permanent values, to crown these forms and these values with a mystical halo, and to employ them in curbing a reluctant history to the will of men. The war, and this stormy peace even more (since the war might still have appeared as a kind of common work) have narrowed the horizon of these men to the nation; a revulsion against the shallow official idealism of the war, and the fear of social dissolution, have made of democracy and humanitarianism the most execrable of taboos. The nation becomes, consciously, a myth, in the pragmatic sense given by Sorel to the word, to be worshipped in thought and action by its adepts, with firm faith, severe discipline, and blind obedience. The "immortal principles" are made fun of, and the Nineteenth Century is dismissed, with Daudet, as a huge and stupid mistake.

Moscow and Rome, Communism and Fascism, are often compared to each other; their striking resemblance (hatred of democracy, and of the *bourgeois* ideology; belief in the power of violence and of myths; voluntarism) and their not less striking opposition (hierarchy against equality; individual against collective economy;

the nation against the world) are emphasized and commented upon. And indeed, within Italy herself the struggle has had some of the bitterness and fierceness of a war of religion; and in continental Europe, the two *formae mentis* are undoubtedly the essential spiritual outcome of the war until now. The nations which have not yet reached either the one or the other, are still involved in the meshes of an irrevocable past; but they will come to one of them soon: they will have to go through one of them.

There is not a third horn of the dilemma: these curves will have to be fully described before the dawn of a different day. Of these curves, the immediate and common origin is in that Messianic spirit which filled the European atmosphere at the end of the war so thickly that you could then almost breathe it in the air. Millennium was the name of the only land to which it seemed possible and reasonable to travel, if you were just emerging from the blood-stained mud of a trench. For a short, charmed interval Europe lived in that magic climate out of which great religions are born; but the Procession of the Apocalypse ended in the Pageant at Versailles, and for peace we were given the confusion of tongues, for one beaten enemy, the sword turning against itself and the nations divided.

Yet that Messianic spirit had posited an exigency which can be eluded, but not overcome. Whatever Fascism and Communism may become for the future historian, they must appear to their adepts as religions, that is, as collections of universal principles sufficient to the whole spirit of man. They must affirm themselves as complete answers to that undeniable spiritual need, and deny the validity of that need in relation to those questions which they leave too clearly unanswered. Therefore both their positive and their negative aspects, their fanaticism and their cynicism, must be studied as elements of a coherent faith, as parts of one body of passionate beliefs.

This study would probably be easier for Communism than for Fascism: the former has had more time and greater opportunity, and its failure, in spirit much more than in practice, is apparent. As for Fascism, though the forms and the acts are manifest, the soul which they intend to reveal, the inner meaning, the spiritual design, are still dubious and involved. Within Fascism itself, a strong though not numerous group is now making a valiant effort

to interpret these forms and these acts in terms of Gentile's philosophy, or "actual Idealism." If the attempt should succeed, it would result not in a mere interpretation, but in a conquest. A philosophy cannot become a religion unless it has "thought itself out," and is therefore ready to stabilize itself as the substance of faith, and to be told in spontaneous and intelligible mythical terms: has "actual Idealism" reached this stage of maturity, and supposing it had reached it, how is it to be explained that it did not appear as a faith or as a collection of myths before the advent of Fascism, and independently? And again, supposing this philosophy to be truly endowed with the power of blossoming out into a religion, will it succeed in conquering those elements of Fascism which are obviously repugnant to it? Will it produce a schism? Will it end by fighting against that which it is now willing to support? Or, being defeated, will it content itself with becoming the cold, servile theology of a discordant truth?

For the present, "actual Idealism" is not an *actual*, but only a potential factor of the religion of Fascism, towards which an infinitely more powerful and more substantial body of myths and beliefs is now also spreading its tentacles: the Church of Rome. Fascism will be the new Faust in this secular tragedy, the struggle between Catholicism and modern thought, the choice being between a form whose spirit is dead, and a spirit which may not yet be able to fashion its own form. The defeat of "actual Idealism" would only mean that modern thought is still unripe for the function to which it aspires, and that it will have to go back again, for a few years or for a few centuries, to the catacombs of individual experience and culture, before finding its place in the sun. In any case, the outcome of the struggle, in this particular episode, will not seal the fate of either of the antagonists, but of Fascism itself. The saint and the devil fought for the soul of Guido da Montefeltro, as some of Dante's readers may remember; and the devil won it with his logic. In human affairs, it is only after the event that we can tell whether logic was on the saint's or on the devil's side.

It may happen, after all, that both the priests and the philosophers will come out of this struggle empty-handed, the black-shirted Faust deciding to keep his soul as it is, without any infusion of either new or ancient sanctity. This would make things much

easier for the spiritual investigator, since it would then be sufficient for him to take those words, those gestures, of which we were speaking before, at their face value, that is, as words, as gestures having a definite and sufficient meaning in themselves, dramatic, political. The philosopher of history and the historian of religions would then be able to point to a continuous process of involution, from the universality of the Mediaeval Mind (and even of the Roman Empire) to the particularity of modern European nations. Europe would have found its several religions, of the nations, of the "*gentes*," of the tribes, instead of discovering the religion for which it seemed to be thirsting, of man, human. And for the religion of Italy, of Fascism in its concrete Italian revelation, *habemus prophetam*: all its elements, and even a few more which have not yet passed into the heart of the multitude, can be found in the work of Gabriele d'Annunzio, and especially in this last book of his, *Per l'Italia degli Italiani*.

No present-day writer, in any country, holds a position approaching d'Annunzio's position in Italy. Rudyard Kipling came very near to being England's d'Annunzio, but the Boer War blasted his chance, and the Great War found him too old, irreparably out of touch with the new temper of his countrymen; and besides, d'Annunzio, though lacking some of Kipling's raciness, of his immediacy, of his popular quality, possesses undoubtedly a much vaster personality. Though not yet over sixty, he has behind himself forty-five years of an immensely varied literary experience and activity: each of his thirty odd volumes, incursions, experiments, accomplishments in all the fields of fiction, poetry, and drama, has been the sensation of its day and, together with the events and adventures of his private, practical life (his loves, his finances, his houses, horses, and dogs) a passionate object of wonder, and scorn, of admiration, of scandal, for two generations of Italians.

All fashions and schools of aesthetic and semi-philosophical thought in Europe, from the pre-Raphaelite Poets to the Russian novelists, from Ibsen to Nietzsche, from Wagner to Scriabine, are reflected in his work: through him, Italian literature (in the narrow meaning of the word, as contrasted to living, original thought) entered once more into the circle of European literature, though more passively perhaps than at any other time in the course of its

history. But the high-water mark of his fortune as a writer falls between 1890 and 1905: his surviving disciples date all from those years. And his place in the general history of literature remains with the French Parnassians and Decadents, and with their cognate and derived writers abroad, the Wildes, the Yeatses, the Hofmannsthals: that is, with the last brood of irreparably "stupid Nineteenth Century" writers. After 1905, though he has never given up the pretence of being and of looking "up to date," yet the novel fashions began to be introduced by younger (and often much lesser) men; and at the same time the temper of Italian culture swerved decidedly from the literary to the philosophical.

But the Wars were far more generous to him than to Kipling: they gave him, in exchange for his lost literary leadership, an indisputable national laureateship. In a time of rapidly deepening and widening patriotic emotions, his truly amazing knowledge and his exclusive love of things Italian—words, works, landscapes, deeds, tempers, traditions—present in every page of his books, marked him out as the true depositary of the nation's spirit. His "moral" ideal, in which Nietzschean phrases and attitudes, literally understood, were adapted as a modern disguise to the Renaissance *principe* and *condottiero*, seemed sufficient to supply with a standard of heroism an age which had lost every perception of the tragic. But it would be unfair to regard either of these aspects of d'Annunzio's personality as superficial and false: they are both true and native, and deep, with all the depth of which he is capable. And their popularity is also deep and genuine: not on account of any aesthetic sympathy (d'Annunzio has never learnt to speak or to write so as to be intelligible to the *non-literati*) but because of a practical, emotional, temperamental affinity with the moods and needs of a new generation.

The Canzoni della Gesta d'Oltremare were the epics of our war with Turkey. Having been sent forth from what d'Annunzio calls his exile in France, their effect was considerably enhanced by a space-perspective, not less favourable than time-perspectives are to the transformation of a man's image in the group's mind: the transformation, in this case, of the Egotist and the Aesthete into the Patriot and the Soldier. And in the Canzoni, written during a crisis of mysticism to which we owe one of d'Annunzio's most subtle prose works, the *Considerazione della Morte*, as well as the

ultradecadent *Mystère de Saint Sébastien*, the Catholic myths and rites appear as an indispensable element of the national tradition: if not as a religion, at least as a superstition essential to the heroic behaviour of the group.

The Great War put its final seal on the transfiguration. The campaign for the intervention of Italy, four years of strenuous war life (d'Annunzio revealing himself as a born soldier, a true lover of danger and scorner of death, a *principe* and a *condottiero*) and lastly the Fiume expedition, fixed his new image as an incarnate model of his own ideal of Italian *virtù*. To the more precise delimitation and fuller adornment of this image, d'Annunzio himself, after having furnished the raw material of action, has also attempted to contribute the poetical and legendary elaboration in a book written during a forced pause in the war, *Il Notturmo*, and in the one which has just been published.

There is a short paragraph in the *Notturmo* in which d'Annunzio defines the nature and the limits of his own personality with a more cruel lucidity than any of his critics ever did: "Life is not an abstraction of aspects and events, but a kind of diffuse sensuousness, a knowledge offered to every sense, a substance good to smell, to feel, to eat." It was with this elementary form of consciousness, with all his animal spirits, as they would have been called in the Middle Ages, wide awake, alert, ready to enjoy and to suffer, and to make of every danger and of every suffering the source of a deeper, intenser joy, that d'Annunzio went so youthfully, so gallantly through the war. Every healthy young soldier has known this exhilaration of the dangerous life: courage is often but the sacrifice of all practical and moral motives to the taste of this depth and intensity of primitive feeling. A beautiful thing in itself, accompanied by an incomparable sense of spiritual freedom, since the spirit, reduced to its simplest functions, is all here, in this body, in this instant, and the body accepts and enjoys the conditions of its instantaneous existence; and a wonderful thing, a prodigy, in a man of d'Annunzio's age.

Even the infirmity which keeps him in his bed, blind and helpless, while he writes, line after line, on narrow strips of paper, this long succession of visions of the war and of his past life, adds new visions, new sensations, to the immense store from which he is

drawing. The intention to build up his own legend is unconcealed: in all his novels he always made himself the protagonist, under a mask; here, at last, he drops the mask, and is the hero of his own song. And yet of this book it can be repeated what a brilliant critic said of his novels in general: it is but a collection of lyrical motives and residua. Admirable, in this respect, and the exquisite texture of the phrase, the delicious richness of the language are a continuous joy to the connoisseur. But no human image becomes visible through these fragments; and this is as it should be, since no true humanity can exist in a world of pure sensuousness, in which the aesthetic dimension may counterfeit at times, but never actually generates out of itself, the essential human dimensions, intellectual and moral.

The book has an even, hard, shiny surface, only occasionally and very slightly troubled by the legendary intention. The war decomposes itself into a multitude of intense sensations of which the poet is the subject and the centre. Events materially tragic, being constantly referred to this centre only, are represented as vivid appearances, in their mere materiality; but more than any of them the reader is likely to remember the episode of the death of the horse Aquilino—a recollection from childhood—since a horse's tragedy can hardly make him feel the absence of the human substance of tragedy.

The new book, *Per l'Italia degli Italiani*, is much more uneven and fragmentary than the *Notturmo*, since the deliberate aim of presenting the ideal image of himself as the model of Italian humanity more frequently interferes with the poet's genuine inspiration. Apart from the pages in which d'Annunzio is still, even here, the naïvely egocentric poet delighting in rare and sometimes fierce, dolorous sensations, the book has no other reality than that which belongs to beautiful words and highly decorative gestures. It is, on the whole, a strange, a pathetic piece of work, in which the author, in his vain attempt to evade the bounds of his purely sensuous and aesthetic world, reminds the reader of a white bear pacing rhythmically the narrow artificial rock which is its prison.

The word *Spirit*, in its Italian and Latin forms (since this Italian prose is frequently interspersed with Latin mottos and fragments like a sacred oration: one symptom, among many others, of senes-

cence and rhetoric involution)—the word Spirit is everywhere in the book. But the thing is absent: from the first to the last page we are constantly kept in the same tense, oratorical, and oracular atmosphere, looking at a succession of symbols, which not even the amazing mimetic powers of the writer can persuade us to accept as truly significant. There is no movement, no development, no progress; that is, no evidence of a real dialectic, spiritual, moral drama.

But these static symbols which we find here clothed in the most gorgeous verbal forms, are substantially those of which we spoke at the beginning of this letter as the popular symbols of a national, political religion. In d'Annunzio, however, strangely coupled with his innate love of violence, we may discover also a yearning towards something more human and higher: a Franciscan ideal of peace and meekness, which resolves itself, like every other element of the d'Annunzian ideal, in a mere attitude. We can therefore easily disregard the difference, and having dismissed this book as a work of art capable of adding but one leaf to the poet's crown, yet treasure it among the documents of these troubled times, not less important because essentially negative.

RAFFAELLO PICCOLI

BOOK REVIEWS

MODEL AMERICANS

AMERICANS. By Stuart P. Sherman. 12mo. 336 pages. Charles Scribner's Sons. \$2.

PROFESSOR SHERMAN once more coaxing American criticism the way it should go.

Like Benjamin Franklin, one of his heroes, he attempts the invention of a creed that shall "satisfy the professors of all religions, and offend none."

He smites the marauding Mr Mencken with a velvet glove, and pierces the obstinate Mr More with a reproachful look. Both gentlemen, of course, will purr and feel flattered.

That's how Professor Sherman treats his enemies: buns to his grizzlies.

Well, Professor Sherman, being a professor, has got to be nice to everybody about everybody. What else does a professor sit in a chair of English for, except to dole out sweets.

Awfully nice, rather cloying. But there, men *are* but children of a later growth.

So much for the professor's attitude. As for his "message." He steers his little ship of Criticism most obviously between the Scylla of Mr Mencken and the Charybdis of Mr P. E. More. I'm sorry I never heard before of either gentleman: except that I dimly remember having read, in the lounge of a Naples hotel, a bit of an article by a Mr Mencken, in German, in some German periodical: all amounting to nothing.

But Mr Mencken is the Scylla of American Criticism, and hence, of American Democracy. There is a verb "to menckenise," and a noun "menckenism." Apparently *to menckenise* is to manufacture jeering little gas-bomb phrases against everything deep and earnest, or high and noble, and to paint the face of corruption with phosphorus, so it shall glow. And a *menckenism* is one of the little stink-gas phrases.

Now the *nouveau riche jeune fille* of the *bourgeoisie*, as Professor Sherman puts it; in other words, the profiteers' flappers, all read Mr Mencken and swear by him: swear that they don't give a nickel for any Great Man that ever was or will be. Great Men are all a bombastical swindle. So asserts the *nouveau riche jeune fille*, on whom, apparently, American democracy rests. And Mr Mencken "learnt it her." And Mr Mencken got it in Germany, where all stink-gas comes and came from, according to Professor Sherman. And Mr Mencken does it to poison the noble and great old spirit of American Democracy, which is grandly Anglo-Saxon in origin, but absolutely AMERICAN in fact.

So much for the Scylla of Mr Mencken. It is the first essay in the book. The Charybdis of Mr P. E. More is the last essay: to this monster the professor warbles another tune. Mr More, author of the Shelbourne Essays, is learned, and steeped in tradition, the very antithesis of the nihilistic stink-gassing Mr Mencken. But alas, Mr More is remote: somewhat haughty and supercilious at his study table. And even, *alasser!* with all his learning and remoteness, he hunts out the risky Restoration wits to hob-nob with on high Parnassus; Wycherley, for example; he likes his wits smutty. He even goes and fetches out Aphra Behn from her disreputable oblivion, to entertain her in public.

And there you have the Charybdis of Mr More: snobbish, distant, exclusive, disdaining even the hero from the Marne who mends the gas bracket: and at the same time absolutely *preferring* the doubtful odour of Wycherley because it is—well, malodorous, says the professor.

Mr Mencken: Great Men and the Great Past are an addled egg full of stink-gas.

Mr P. E. More: Great Men of the Great Past are utterly beyond the *mobile vulgus*. Let the *mobile vulgus* (in other words, the democratic millions of America) be cynically scoffed at by the gentlemen of the Great Past, especially the naughty ones.

To the Menckenites, Professor Sherman says: Jeer not at the Great Past and at the Great Dead. Heroes are heroes still, they do not go addled, as you would try to make out, nor turn into stink-bombs. Tradition is honourable still, and will be honourable for ever, though it may be splashed like a futurist picture with the rotten eggs of menckenism.

To the smaller and more select company of Moreites: Scorn not

the horny hand of noble toil; "—the average man is, like (Mr More) himself, at heart a mystic, vaguely hungering for a peace that diplomats cannot give, obscurely seeking the permanent amid the transitory; a poor swimmer struggling for a rock amid the flux of waters, a lonely pilgrim longing for the shadow of a mighty rock in a weary land. And if 'P. E. M.' had a bit more of that natural sympathy of which he is so distrustful, he would have perceived that what more than anything else to-day keeps the average man from lapsing into Yahooism is the religion of democracy, consisting of a little bundle of general principles which make him respect himself and his neighbour; a bundle of principles kindled in crucial times by an intense emotion, in which his self-interest, his petty vices, and his envy are consumed as with fire; and he sees the common weal as the mighty rock in the shadow of which his little life and personality are to be surrendered, if need be, as things negligible and transitory."

All right, Professor Sherman. All the profiteers, and shovers, and place-grabbers, and bullies, especially bullies, male and female, all that sort of gentry of the late war were, of course, outside the average. The supermen of the occasion.

The Babbitts, while they were on the make.

And as for the mighty rocks in weary lands, as far as my experience goes, they have served the pilgrims chiefly as sanitary offices and places in whose shadows men shall leave their offal and tin cans.

But there you have a specimen of Professor Sherman's "style." And the thin ends of his parabola.

The great arch is of course the Religion of Democracy, which the professor italicizes. If you want to trace the curve you must follow the course of the essays.

After Mr Mencken and Tradition comes Franklin. Now Benjamin Franklin is one of the founders of the Religion of Democracy. It was he who invented the creed that should satisfy the professors of all religions, not of universities only, and offend none. With a deity called Providence. Who turns out to be a sort of superlative Mr Wanamaker, running the globe as a revolving dry-goods store, according to a profit-and-loss system; the profit counted in plump citizens whose every want is satisfied: like chickens in an absolutely coyote-proof chicken-run.

In spite of this new attempt to make us like Dr Franklin, the

flesh wearies on our bones at the thought of him. The professor hints that the good old gentleman on Quaker Oats was really an old sinner. If it had been proved to us, we *might* have liked him. As it is, he just wearies the flesh on our bones. *Religion civile*, indeed.

Emerson. The next essay is called The Emersonian Liberation. Well, Emerson is a great man still: or a great individual. And heroes are heroes still, though their banners may decay, and stink.

It is true that lilies may fester. And virtues likewise. The great Virtue of one age has a trick of smelling far worse than weeds in the next.

It is a sad but undeniable fact.

Yet why so sad, fond lover, prithee why so sad? Why should Virtue remain incorruptible, any more than anything else? If stars wax and wane, why should Goodness shine for ever unchanged? That too makes one tired. Goodness sweals and gutters, the light of the Good goes out with a stink, and lo, somewhere else a new light, a new Good. Afterwards, it may be shown that it is eternally the same Good. But to us poor mortals at the moment, it emphatically isn't.

And that is the point about Emerson and the Emersonian Liberation—save the word! Heroes are heroes still: safely dead. Heroism is always heroism. But the hero who was heroic one century, uplifting the banner of a creed, is followed the next century by a hero heroically ripping that banner to rags. *Sic transit veritas mundi*.

Emerson was an idealist: a believer in "continuous revelation," continuous inrushes of inspirational energy from the Over-soul. Professor Sherman says: "His message when he leaves us is not, 'Henceforth be masterless,' but, 'Bear thou henceforth the sceptre of thine own control through life and the passion of life.'"

When Emerson says: "I am surrounded by messengers of God who send me credentials day by day," then all right for him. But he cozily forgot that there are many messengers. He knew only a sort of smooth-shaven Gabriel. But as far as we remember, there is Michael too: and a terrible discrepancy between the credentials of the pair of 'em. Then there are other cherubim with outlandish names, bringing very different messages than those Ralph Waldo got: Israfel, and even Mormon. And a whole bunch of others. But

Emerson had a stone-deaf ear for all except a nicely aureoled Gabriel *qui n'avait pas de quoi*.

Emerson listened to one sort of message, and only one. To all the rest he was blank. Ashtaroth and Ammon are gods as well, and hand out their own credentials. But Ralph Waldo wasn't having any. They could never ring *him* up. He was only connected on the Ideal 'phone. "We are all aiming to be idealists," says Emerson, "and covet the society of those who make us so, as the sweet singer, the orator, the ideal painter."

Well, we're pretty sick of the ideal painters and the uplifting singers. As a matter of fact we have worked the ideal bit of our nature to death, and we shall go crazy if we can't start working from some other bit. Idealism now is a sick nerve, and the more you rub on it the worse you feel afterwards. Your later reactions aren't pretty at all. Like Dostoevsky's Idiot, and President Wilson sometimes.

Emerson believes in having the courage to treat all men as equals. It takes some courage *not* to treat them so now.

"Shall I not treat all men as gods?" he cries.

If you like, Waldo, but we've got to pay for it, when you've made them *feel* that they're gods. A hundred million American godlets is rather much for the world to deal with.

The fact of the matter is, all those gorgeous inrushes of exaltation and spiritual energy which made Emerson a great man, now make us sick. They are with us a drug habit. So when Professor Sherman urges us in Ralph Waldo's footsteps, he is really driving us nauseously astray. Which perhaps is hard lines on the Professor, and us, and Emerson. But it wasn't I who started the mills of God a-grinding.

I like the essay on Emerson. I like Emerson's real courage. I like his wild and genuine belief in the Over-soul and the inrushes he got from it. But it is a museum-interest. Or else it is a taste of the old drug to the old spiritual drug-fiend in me.

We've got to have a different sort of sardonic courage. And the sort of credentials we are due to receive from the god in the shadow would have been real bones out of hell-broth to Ralph Waldo. *Sic transeunt Dei hominorum*.

So no wonder Professor Sherman sounds a little wistful, and somewhat pathetic, as he begs us to follow Ralph Waldo's trail.

Hawthorne: A Puritan Critic of Puritanism. This essay is concerned chiefly with an analysis and a praise of *The Scarlet Letter*. Well, it is a wonderful book. But why does nobody give little Nathaniel a kick for his duplicity. Professor Sherman says there is nothing erotic about *The Scarlet Letter*. Only neurotic. It wasn't the sensual act itself had any meaning for Hawthorne. Only the Sin. He knows there's nothing deadly in the act itself. But if it is Forbidden, immediately it looms lurid with interest. He is not concerned for a moment with what Hester and Dimmesdale really felt. Only with their situations as Sinners. And Sin looms lurid and thrilling, when after all it is only just a normal sexual passion. This luridness about the book makes one feel like spitting. It is something worked up: invented in the head and grafted on to the lower body, like some serpent of supposition under the fig-leaf. It depends so much on *coverings*. Suppose you took off the fig-leaf, the serpent isn't there. And so the relish is all two-faced and tiresome. *The Scarlet Letter* is a masterpiece, but in duplicity and half-false excitement.

And when one remembers *The Marble Faun*, all the parochial priggishness and poor-bloodedness of Hawthorne in Italy, one of the most bloodless books ever written, one feels like giving Nathaniel a kick in the seat of his poor little pants and landing him back in New England again. For the rolling, many-godded mediaeval and pagan world was too big a prey for such a ferret.

Walt Whitman. Walt is the high priest of the Religion of Democracy. Yet "at the first bewildering contact one wonders whether his urgent touch is of lewdness or divinity," says Professor Sherman.

"All I have said concerns you."—But it doesn't. One ceases to care about so many things. One ceases to respond or to react. And at length other things come up, which Walt and Professor Sherman never knew.

"Whatever else it involves, democracy involves at least one grand salutary elementary admission, namely, that the world exists for the benefit and for the improvement of all the decent individuals in it."—O Lord, how long will you submit to this Insurance Policy interpretation of the Universe! How "decent"? Decent in what way? Benefit! Think of the world's existing for people's "benefit and improvement."

So wonderful, says Professor Sherman, the way Whitman identifies himself with everything and everybody: Runaway Slaves and all the rest. But we no longer want to take the whole hullabaloo to our bosom. We no longer want to "identify ourselves" with a lot of other things and other people. It is a sort of lewdness. *Noli me tangere*, "you." I don't want "you."

Whitman's "you" doesn't get me.

We don't want to be embracing everything any more. Or to be embraced in one of Waldo's vast promiscuous armfuls. *Merçi, monsieur!*

We've had enough democracy.

Professor Sherman says that if Whitman had lived "at the right place in these years of Proletarian Millenium, he would have been hanged as a reactionary member of the *bourgeoise*." ('Tisn't my spelling.)

And he gives Whitman's own words in proof: "The true gravitation hold of liberalism in the United States will be a more universal ownership of property, general homesteads, general comforts—a vast intertwining reticulation of wealth. . . . She (Democracy) asks for men and women with occupations, well-off, owners of houses and acres, and with cash in the bank and with some craving for literature too"—so that they can buy certain books. Oh, Walt!

Allons! The road is before us.

Joaquin Miller: Poetical Conquistador of the West. A long essay with not much spirit in it, showing that Miller was a true son of the Wild and Woolly West, in so far as he was a very good imitator of other people's poetry (note the Swinburnian bit) and a rather poor assumer of other people's played-out poses. A self-conscious little "wild" man, like the rest of the "wild" men. The Wild West is a pose that pays Zane Grey to-day, as it once paid Miller and Bret Harte and Buffalo Bill.

A Note on Carl Sandburg. That Carl is a super-self-conscious literary gent stampeding around with red-ochre blood on his hands and smeared-on soot darkening his craggy would-be-criminal brow: but that his heart is as tender as an old tomato.

Andrew Carnegie. That Andy was the most perfect American citizen Scotland ever produced, and the sweetest example of how beautifully the *Religion Civile* pays, in cold cash.

Roosevelt and the National Psychology. Theodore didn't have a spark of magnanimity in his great personality, says Professor Sherman, what a pity! And you see where it lands you, when you play at being pro-German. You go quite out of fashion.

Evolution of the Adams Family. Perfect Pedigree of the most aristocratic Democratic family. Your aristocracy is played out, my dear fellows, but don't cry about it, you've always got your Democracy to fall back on. If you don't like falling back on it of your own free will, you'll be shoved back on it by the Will of the People.

"Man is the animal that destiny cannot break."

But the Will of the People can break Man, and the animal man, and the destined man, all the lot, and grind 'em to democratic powder, Professor Sherman warns us.

Allons! en-masse is before us.

But when Germany is thoroughly broken, Democracy finally collapses. (My own prophecy.)

An Imaginary Conversation With Mr P. E. More: You've had the gist of that already.

Well, there is Professor Sherman's dish of cookies which he bids you eat and have. An awfully sweet book, all about having your cookies and eating 'em. The cookies are Tradition, and Heroes, and Great Men, and \$350,000,000 in your pocket. And eating 'em is Democracy, Serving Mankind, piously giving most of the \$350,000,000 back again. "Oh, nobly and heroically get \$350,000,000 together," chants Professor Sherman in this litany of having your cookies and eating 'em, "and then piously and munificently give away \$349,000,000 again."

D. H. LAWRENCE

P. S. You can't get past Arithmetic.

A NOVEL OF THE ARTIST

PAINT. By Thomas Craven. 12mo. 229 pages. Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$2.

TO those who have followed with interest Mr Thomas Craven's lucid and discriminating articles on the tendencies in modern art his first novel, *Paint*, will come somewhat as a shock. That Mr Craven has chosen one of the most case-hardened themes in existence on which to secure his spanking indignation—that of the genius in opposition to society—is in itself audacious. But when this genius turns out to be a veritable charging ram of barbaric obtuseness, who flings lighted cigarette stubs on velvet carpets, puts his feet up on anything that is handy, makes "soughing" noises after eating, "loosens his belt" when it "restricts him," appears habitually in dirty linen, and lies awake at night devising a scheme of society in which members with good manners shall be hanged, Mr Craven will have to be a most persuasive artist indeed in order to arouse in us those sympathies for his hero which his present book so clearly petitions.

With the author's most obvious thesis we are wholly in sympathy. It is all very true and all very sad. America is as a whole profoundly antipathetic to art, and even more profoundly ignorant of the derivation and significance of modern art. Only one individual in a thousand, probably, consents to step outside the wall of his traditional acceptance and face new disturbing values that challenge him to honest and original consideration. But Carlock, we maintain, was as purblind and *bourgeois*, as limited in his view of the world, as the most complacent and somnambulant of stock brokers.

As art Mr Craven's book cannot be considered. It is too obviously a treatise where intellect has been harnessed hurriedly to anger and the guiding rein of a really imaginative conception is entirely lacking. It is an attack on the lethargic art world of America—academicians, critics, dealers, public—with as protagonist the rumpled, scarecrow figure of Carlock. The minor parts are mere signposts bearing various recorded accusations. The quality of Mr

Craven's so-called realism may be judged by the following chance fragments of writing: "the streets squirmed"—"life bumped along"—"Carlock's enthusiasm wouldn't bubble"—"he talked nice to her"—"in the Village, where greasy poets read free verse." Examples equally banal or vulgar abound on every page.

It is almost with a feeling of deliverance that we turn from Carlock to Nettie, the bouncing street trollop who performs the dubious service of saving him from starvation. We would like to defend her, however, against the young man's indomitable egoism. If she dozes while he is reading aloud some obscure passages from an abstruse book on aesthetics, he prods her awake with epithets. When he returns unexpectedly to find her entertaining in their rooms (for which she incidentally is paying) a feeble and defenseless young man, he flings him out hatless and coatless, and comes near to breaking every bone in Nettie's body, while refusing consistently to satisfy her craving for affection. When the money gives out he tells her to "doll up" and bring in more.

The story reaches its climax of ludicrous unreality when Carlock, rising like a demented Golem from his death-bed, insists on adding great fevered strokes to his most important masterpiece. One is deeply relieved when it is all over and Nettie, tearful and triumphant, in the one pleasant and satisfactorily humorous episode in the whole book, refuses to part with Carlock's paintings which he has left her in his will, and, surrounded by crestfallen and suppliant dealers, has them carted off in a great van to her rooms. Thus the hoarse and grating homily arrives at its logical conclusion. One suspects, however, that her sorrow soon assuaged Nettie will sell the astounding canvases for fabulous sums. One also suspects that the sums paid will in the end prove a little too fabulous for the real worth of the pictures.

ALYSE GREGORY

MR HERRICK'S NEW NOVEL

HOMELY LILLA. By Robert Herrick. 12mo. 293 pages. Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$1.90.

THE reception of *Homely Lilla* shows how seriously Mr Herrick is taken by American readers and critics, how significant an event is his return to the novel after a long absence. Nevertheless, to hail this book as the product of seven years' observation and contemplation is to over-estimate it. It is rather a practice flight, a preliminary warming-up for a more important enterprise, which will appear later. It is of happy augury, since it shows that Mr Herrick has gained rather than lost in mastery of his vehicle, and that he has his public with him.

Homely Lilla follows the model most characteristic of the English novel, biography—the form in which Mr Herrick has usually cast his fiction. Only once, so far as I remember, in *Together*, has he adopted a more complicated procedure, involving the drawing of several lines of advance into a single pattern. *Lilla* is the developing principle of this story; other characters appear and disappear as the light of her presence plays on them and passes on. By this process the story gains complete unity, but I have a feeling that Mr Herrick has carried it too far. His treatment of his subordinate characters is too casual. Except for *Lilla's* mother, we do not fully believe in them, and they do not support the illusion of a peopled world. *Lilla* looms too large among them—she is too far in the foreground—a bit out of the picture, which tends in consequence to lose the perspective of life.

Undoubtedly this failing is the result of Mr Herrick's preoccupation with his theme. That theme is one with which he has dealt consciously and conscientiously since his beginning as a novelist. the problem of separating reality from unreality in life. It formed the motive of his earliest novels, *The Gospel of Freedom*, *The Web of Life*, and was recognized in the title of his third, originally called *The Real World*, now *Jock o' Dreams*. In book after book he brought some set of conventional or social values to the test of individual experience, and found it wanting—The

Common Lot, A Life for a Life, One Woman's Life, The Healer. In Clark's Field, the last of the series resumed by Lilla, he ironically considered as a source of life values that ultimate social reality which is called *par excellence* real estate. Now Mr Herrick's indifferent treatment of his other characters in contrast with Lilla has a symbolic quality. She is a real person. When she learns how real she is she can do without the poor copies of life which surround her. With her large, free stride she walks away from them. To Lilla the ultimate reality is maternity. She is the fruitful, full-breasted mother; and the unpardonable sin of her husband is to defraud her womb. Her power of blessing goes forth in healing, impartially to the girl with whom her husband deceives her and the boy who pities her until he desires her. Her ultimate fulfilment she finds through her son and her mature lover; but even they chiefly serve negatively to define the unreality of the legal bond which binds her to her husband. The positive relation which exists between her and them we must take for granted. They are too far away from us for intimate knowledge—we suspect that Lilla herself is nearer to us than to them. She is certainly nearer to Mr Herrick.

But though the reader may find certain inconsistencies in the scale of Mr Herrick's design, due very possibly to the exigencies of serial publications to which Homely Lilla was originally subjected, he will note few in the detail of the drawing. The story is told with a simplicity, economy, and directness which assures us that Mr Herrick's craftsmanship has not suffered from disuse—rather, it has gained. He has avoided the over-emphasis which marred certain earlier works, and has achieved an easy uniformity of texture. Always sparing of condiment, ornament, sentiment, and other adventitious forms of the novel-reader's satisfaction, he produced in Homely Lilla a truly Lenten offering. Yet there is something impressive about its literal homely style, a mirror for the reflection of Lilla herself.

ROBERT MORSS LOVETT

MR ROBINSON'S MOONLIGHT

ROMAN BARTHOLOW. *By Edwin Arlington Robinson.* 12mo. 191 pages. The Macmillan Company. \$3.50.

THE POETRY OF EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON. *By Lloyd Morris.* 12mo. 116 pages. George H. Doran and Company. \$1.50.

MR LLOYD MORRIS'S monograph on Mr E. A. Robinson was written to commemorate an award and "attempts to express the appreciative attitude of the Authors' Club toward Mr Robinson's work." It is, therefore, rather like a speech at a birthday dinner: except for an interesting and valuable chapter on Mr Robinson's philosophic sources, it has little importance as criticism and it would perhaps be a mistake to expect it to have. Still I cannot but boggle at the wholesale way in which Mr Morris has swallowed Mr Robinson. There is no word of his limitations; no candid attempt to gauge his stature. To read him you would think that all Mr Robinson's poems had achieved an equally consummate success.

That this is very far from being true it seems to me that Mr Robinson's latest poem shows. It is one of the most arid products of a mind which has always run much into the sands. I will admit, *à la rigueur*, that the novel in verse is a practicable literary form (since, I suppose, *The Ring and the Book* has still some claims). And I will grant that Mr Robinson's shadowy world is an authentic replica of the real one: with the examples of Hawthorne and Henry James we should do ill to refuse credence to shadows. It seems to be characteristic of the New England genius to combine shyness with its extreme shrewdness—to be more occupied with casuistry than with action and to prefer ghosts to carnal men. To understand the fiction of New England it is necessary to accept this world of phantoms. But what I cannot forgive Mr Robinson the poet is the absence of poetry in his poem. Surely a poem should be beautiful as well as interesting; it is beauty which constitutes it

a poem. And Roman Bartholow, though it is sometimes interesting, can almost never be said to be beautiful.

Yet Mr Robinson began as a real poet—and a poet of a very rare sort. He was the last, and probably the greatest, of the authentic poets of New England. To the country of Longfellow and Whittier—the lone houses and sea-scoured coast-towns, the cold thin air of the northern hills and the blackness of the northern nights—he brought a more sophisticated point of view and a far greater artistic seriousness. Luke Havergal and Aaron Stark are even better than Floyd Ireson. And the moral ideas of *The Man Against the Sky* are a marked advance on *The Psalm of Life*.

But Mr Robinson, even in youth, was a poet of failure and regret. He was preoccupied with New England in decay. In the moonlight of an eternal autumn he sat brooding on the poor ghosts of men—brooding sadly rather than in grief: time has calmed this passion like the others. Through his long contemplation he has learned that things are doomed to this tragic end; one can only keep one's eye on "the gleam," which drifts faintly on the weedy dunes—pale green like an *ignis fatuus*—surely the most spectral and unluminous beacon which ever kept a poet from despair. His hope can never warm us with its rays; it is only his sad moonlight which enchants us. When the red western gates have been locked, the moonlight strips the world to white bones, where the phantoms of men move faintly in eternal unfinished gestures.

And since Mr Robinson began with autumn he has never had his rightful spring. He was old from the very first. When the time came for him to be really old his trees were left doubly bare. Coming on the scene to find the flutes of Arcady "broken" and Amaryllis "grown old," his best efforts have done little ever since to repair these important casualties. A sterility has blighted his work; its glamour is fading paler and paler. Always poignant rather than intense, its very poignancy has been slowly eroded. I will not say that such things as Avon's Harvest and Avenel Gray have not still sometimes poignancy and beauty; but I cannot, with Mr Morris, accept his Arthurian poems as crowning glories. Save for a lovely line here and there, they are among the flattest of blank-verse deserts. His old blank-verse idylls of New England had more beauty and more life.

And when it comes to Roman Bartholow and his later historical

monologues, we are even further from the old charm. In Roman Bartholow, for example, we hear much, as usual, of moonlight; the culmination of the poem is enveloped in it. But it is not the moonlight we used to know. It is a moonlight which no longer sheds radiance. It brings no beauty to the unpleasing situation which it is supposed to bathe. That situation, subtly understood and skillfully presented as it is, never undergoes the complete transmutation which makes an idea into a work of art.

Yet Mr Robinson, for all his later aridity, is one of the few first-rate artists we have. It would be ungrateful to complain too much of his dreariness; he has already charmed us enough. His very failures are marked as no one else's are with a high originality and distinction. Only a distinguished and original mind could ever have conceived or produced them. And their example has more literary importance than other people's blazing successes.

EDMUND WILSON, JR.

OMITTING SCOTLAND YARD

THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH. By Gilbert K. Chesterton. 12mo. 365 pages. Harper and Brothers. \$2.

IT has escaped the attention of no one interested in such things that Mr Chesterton is a writer of superior detective stories. The reason for his superiority may be that he writes them as he writes everything else, with all his powers and with all his amazing convictions. He condescends no more here than he did in his fine *History of England*, and the *History* had no more careless pages than this book has. None of the stories in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* are better than the earliest of the *Father Brown* series; and the go and gusto of the magnificent *Man Who Was Thursday* are perceptibly weakened. Yet they are good—better by far than the mystery stories based on the opposite conviction.

For it is a conviction more than a theory with Mr Chesterton that the elements of a mystery are commonplace. He escapes the fallacy of believing that all common life is full of that kind of mystery which requires a detective from Scotland Yard for its solution; but he knows that human beings are far more astonished and impressed by a slight variation in the things they know intimately than by the arrival of the unheard-of and the unexpected. Thus in *The Fad of the Fisherman* we are presented with a man who sits fishing all day, leaving his post only at sunset. And one day two men go to him with urgent information and return saying that he refuses to budge. It is only when, at sunset, his figure is still seen motionless that the truth arrives—the man is dead.

One or two of these stories are rather high-life; for the most part the wild romance and the thrill of mystery and terror are irruptions in everyday existence. The *Vanishing Prince* makes use of a scarecrow and "it was a manifest if melancholy truth that the architect was an artist." In each one the complication is deft and the false scents are managed with a grave honesty. If one man is killed and six are suspected it is because, in Mr Chesterton's philosophy, each of the six probably has a good reason for committing

the murder. These are reasonably intelligible and reasonably real people—made so by the infusion into them of their author's vital loves and hates. They are all here—Jews and Little England and sceptics and red-haired girls and monomaniacs. For their moment they are intensely alive. It is enough; and the prose style which Mr Chesterton developed out of Swinburne and which he occasionally debauches is used with a new sort of restraint—the restraint which comes from tiredness.

I do not mean that Mr Chesterton is physically or mentally tired; I mean that the battle in a sense goes against him and that every once in a while he suspects the people in whose behalf he daily lays down his life. It is possible after all, that the great majority of Englishmen do not care for drunkenness and do care for divorce; and whenever Mr Chesterton regards them in that possible light, his own light goes out. That is why in this book the protagonist of his ideas is a man poles apart from the immortal Syme with his abounding energy and his neat convictions and his violence. Horne Fisher knows too much to do anything after a certain point has been reached; he solves mysteries, confronts criminals, and reports nobody to Headquarters. It is as well that this one was killed; it would be far from well if that other one should be hanged. At the end he acts, to be sure; he kills a minister of the crown, his own uncle; and he gives up his life for England. That, too, is an "appalling allegory."

On Mr Chesterton's head be it if he makes us think of such things. Essentially and most significantly he is a story-teller; and he knows that an idea or an emotion is a good thing to give a story point. Whenever he uses these elements he gets them deeply into his story and leaves it to the reader to get them out again. The story itself, the swift entertaining fiction is always there.

GILBERT SELDES

BRIEFER MENTION

SUZANNE AND THE PACIFIC, by Jean Giraudoux, translated by Ben Ray Redman (12mo, 286 pages; Putnam: \$2) is replete with technical victories. The elements of the plot are introduced with thrills, and the functions of the narrative are operated smoothly, though in an unaccustomed manner. In particular, M Giraudoux piles up those contradictions, absurdities, and irrationalities so esteemed by the Dadaists until one is certain that something surprising must happen, and the decisive statement is always commensurate with the preparation. Psychology is utilized to carry loneliness up to a pitch of despair at the climax, and this plus the shipwrecked Suzanne's attachment to a civilization of slot machines, railway switches, electric bulbs, and perfumes from Guerlain's furnishes the solid overtones to a subject-matter of fancy and fantasy. The book gives a sense of difficulties happily overcome rather than a sense of inevitability produced by the harmonies of the imagination.

DRUIDA, by John T. Frederick (illus., 12mo, 286 pages; Knopf: \$2.50) is a story of commonplace Middle-Western folk in contact with a central character, Druida, who seems to represent the elemental earth spirit of the region. It would take a certain magic to make this union perfect and hence wholly convincing, and the author is no Celt in his artistic approach. Nevertheless he has honesty, calmness, and understanding. These give his novel a stark, detached beauty, promising much for the author's future. A departure from the usual in novel-publishing is found in seven woodcuts by Wilfred Jones, all of which, except the first, interpret discerningly the quality of the story.

FLAMING YOUTH, by Warner Fabian (12mo, 336 pages; Boni & Liveright: \$2) emerges, in the author's phrase, "out of the vatic incense-cloud of pseudonymity" as the truth about the twentieth-century woman of the luxury-class. It is written by a family physician—possibly one whose prescriptions are mostly pint ones. Not counting the incense, it is a thoroughly entertaining piece of fiction—half Scott Fitzgerald and half "Should a woman tell?" It tears no veils from modern society, although it does demonstrate that members of the smart set do not get that way by listening to one another's conversation.

THE INVISIBLE GODS, by Edith Franklin Wyatt (12mo, 433 pages; Harper: \$2). Most of us find satisfaction in watching the fortunes—or better still, the misfortunes—of our neighbours. The Invisible Gods arouses at least, and at most, this common interest. A large and loyal family is shattered by the responsibilities its ideals incur; a sterling theme, but the treatment is not equally sound. The development is burdened by lachrymose pronouncements and redundant descriptions. The book is a loosely constructed, vague-minded body moving heavy of foot in the narrow circle of the author's sentimentality.

FUTILITY: A Novel on Russian Themes, by William Gerhardt, preface by Edith Wharton (12mo, 256 pages; Duffield: \$1.75) attempts to jazz the themes of the great Russian novelists. But the creation of jazz demands a high vitality, whereas Mr Gerhardt's process is simply to devitalize his facts. The result is Chekhov in terms of Christopher Morley, Dostoevsky in terms of F. P. A., Tolstoy in terms of Stephen Leacock. This extends comfort to those who are bewildered by Russian fiction, but to those who have outgrown laughing at repeated orders for soup and the repeated reply that it will be ready in three-quarters of an hour such a substitution of an inferior sense of life for profound visions of living must seem dull.

THE RED REDMAYNES, by Eden Phillpotts (12mo, 377 pages; Macmillan: \$2). Mr Phillpotts returns to his Dartmoor country, and—the plot thickens. Evidently the author's knitting days are over, and he has dedicated himself to unravelling. Instead of character studies against a background of industry, he gives us crime against a background of mystery—with chapters labelled A Clue, The Compact, Revolver and Pickaxe, and Death in the Cave. E. Phillipps Oppenheim had better look to his bloodstains!

RUBÈ, by G. A. Borgese, translated from the Italian by Isaac Goldberg (12mo, 394 pages; Harcourt, Brace: \$2.50) is an Italian version of the war psychology novel, picturing a bankrupt world with the pockets of its soul turned inside out, and arid with despair. The hero, one Fillipo Rubè, suffers from the present-day mania for annihilation, and the story of his pilgrimage is a furious pursuit of chaos. Child of the old world, having thrown all inherited standards overboard, and too sterile to give birth to his own, he plunges headlong into the abyss. Rubè approximates the proportions of an epic of these last barren years.

FASHIONS FOR MEN AND THE SWAN, by Franz Molnar (12mo, 309 pages; Boni & Liveright: \$2) are two satirical comedies dealing with love, business, and deposed royalty. The first, which ran with no great success in New York, is not a very effective attempt to criticize ironically current business and problem plays. The other has been widely played in Europe. It is classical in plot, but peopled with characters of a modern cut with contemporary psychology. Molnar creates problems for his characters, makes them do unthinkable things, and at the end introduces a situation no different than in the beginning.

PENDER AMONG THE RESIDENTS, by Forrest Reid (12mo, 278 pages; Houghton Mifflin: \$2) is an expert pattern of suspense unfolded by a series of amusing situations in polite society. The author has a good ear, a sophisticated brain, alert perceptions of the comic, and a skill wholly equal to the subtle task of stitching an interior ghost plot to the external material one. A slick craftsman, he wastes no fraction of the pulling power of undisclosed secrets. But the distinction between this method and the method by which an artist creates a sense of inevitability in his structure is ultimate. The difference is between something which can charm but once and something which can be read many times, the difference, in short, between entertainment and experience.

ON, by Hilaire Belloc (12mo, 253 pages; Doran: \$2) is a collection of thirty-one short essays that possess less individuality than diversity, and rather more suavity than the urbanity of actual charm. The subjects range from footnotes to the hatred of numbers, from titles to educational reform. A mildly acid eye is turned on these topics just long enough to transform the milk they contain into something that is not so much sweet or bitter as something pallid and tepid and sour.

The chapters of *THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY*, by Fred Lewis Pattee (12mo, 388 pages; Harper: \$2.50) are constructed in the manner of currently popular textbooks: biographical facts about the writer under consideration, with dates; literary influences; works, again with dates; appreciation, in many instances quoted. This method insists on details as necessary to comprehensiveness; but it does not regard clarity as a requisite of equal importance. Professor Pattee's book is adumbrated by the prudent fallacy that a literary historian—self-imposed model for his literary students—must chronicle without judging. The author's opinions, a few of them staunchly independent, are unobtrusively inserted. The book is thorough, but not concise; informative, but not formative.

THINGS THAT HAVE INTERESTED ME, by Arnold Bennett (12mo, 264 pages; Doran: \$2.50). Two dozen novels, a dozen plays, and a handful of miscellaneous works and pocket philosophies have in no wise diminished the eager outlook and racing curiosity of their author, who writes "The truth is, nature still exists"—and takes an unbounded pleasure in the fact. Mr Bennett has little patience with James Joyce because the latter has a colossal "down" on humanity, and he withers A. B. Walkley as a critic who "surveys the modern stage as a spiritual exercise to test his powers of repudiation." The rest of the world Mr Bennett finds very much to his liking; he embraces it in the same mood as Kipling's fellow "went into a public-house to get a pint of beer"—which is not precisely a crusading spirit, but probably just as pleasing to the gods.

LYRIC FORMS FROM FRANCE, by Helen Louise Cohen (12mo, 527 pages; Harcourt, Brace: \$1.75). Inclusive rather than exclusive, the editor has gathered into her net singers of varying gifts ranging from the exquisitely dainty Austin Dobson to the uninspired Brander Matthews. The princes of persiflage, the spinners of airy, wistful sentiment, the elegant triflers are here assembled. As if determined to keep personal taste and bias strictly out of it, the compiler has chosen to be indiscriminately catholic. Hence an array of the exquisite with the banal, high grade with low.

AMERICAN POETRY, 1922, A MISCELLANY (12mo, 200 pages; Harcourt, Brace: \$1.75). This collection of poems is well characterized as "A Miscellany," for the chaff is mixed indiscriminately with the grains of wheat, and a little good poetry is to be found in company with much doggerel. One would hesitate to call this anthology representative of the best in contemporary American poetry, for to make such a statement would be to imply that much of the best is worthless.

PETRO ARETINO, by Edward Hutton (8vo, 268 pages; Houghton Mifflin: \$4). This is a biography of the Renaissance "Monster" who, while he lived, was so feared and mistrusted that even after his death chroniclers of the period have been unwilling to mention his name. And so, especially in English-speaking countries, he is practically unknown. Yet here was a man who wielded tremendous influence on sixteenth-century Venice. It is a pity that his work and letters, the best commentaries we have on his period, have been published in English only in private editions; a man who was the greatest critic both of politics and of art of that time, a friend of Michael Angelo, a "gossip" of Titian would certainly be interesting to read. And this is why Mr Hutton has performed a valuable service in writing this authoritative and competent biography.

RICHARD MIDDLETON, the Man and His Work, by Henry Savage (illus., 8vo, 210 pages; Small, Maynard: \$3) is rather a *pot-pourri* of quotations from a "minor" poet interspersed with fervid and banal comments than a portrait of the artist. There is entirely too much of Henry Savage and too little of Richard Middleton in this biography. After all, and especially in the case of Middleton, the man is first, the poet only secondary. Mr Savage's volume is a sincere tribute, but a tribute only to that part of the man we already know from his literary work.

EDGAR A. POE: A PSYCHOPATHIC STUDY, by John W. Robertson, M.D. (illus., 8vo, 331 pages; Putnam: \$3.50) is yet another endeavour to visit the terminology of Matteawan on the Muses. Dr Robertson exhibits fairly conclusive if fairly stale evidence that Poe's aberrations were not wholly crapulous; but his findings are more in the nature of an epitaph than a strict autopsy, for the post-mortem is constantly interrupted by literary eulogies, the nature of which may be summed up by revealing the secret that he considers For Annie one of the most remarkable of his victim's effusions.

THE BIOLOGY OF DEATH, by Raymond Pearl (12mo, 275 pages; Lippincott: \$2.50) is a partially technical, but otherwise extremely readable monograph on the causes and chances of our somatic decline and fall. No actually new data are presented on the etiology of senescence and dissolution; but the statistical field of human mortality is well reviewed, and some very significant tables of probabilities are gathered together, setting forth the apparent influence of environment and heredity on longevity. The work is generously illustrated with photographs and graphs, and is further amplified with an exceptionally replete bibliography.

THE GOOSE STEP, by Upton Sinclair (12mo, 488 pages; Upton Sinclair: \$2) is a study in American educational factories, written in the most trenchant manner of our irrepressible present-day St George. Rumour has it that Mr Upton Sinclair is a monomaniac for ever sallying forth to give battle to imaginary dragons. Nevertheless, if half of what he records in his latest book be true, and it is impossible to deny the facts Mr Sinclair has arranged so formidably, *The Goose Step* is a terrific indictment of our so-called institutions of learning.

COMMENT

WE are glad to publish herewith the letter which Dr Schnitzler has addressed to us and through us to American producers and publishers, but it is impossible for us to take any pleasure in the circumstances which have made such a letter necessary. It is not only on his own behalf that Dr Schnitzler makes his protest, and our own communication with European authors verifies every painful detail of what he says. The isolation of Central Europe—no longer existing as a political or commercial fact—is continued in one sense by some of those who deal (the word is accurate) in art and letters.

We appeal directly to such organizations as the P. E. N. Club and the Authors League to act promptly and decisively in the matter. And we do so all the more freely because the injustice is not one-sided and the American publisher has everything to gain by destroying the pestilential literary freebooter who now makes a moderately good living off him. For the honest American publisher is continually being taken in by unauthorized agents, pays reasonable royalties, acts legally and honourably, and discovers two years later that his respected author considers him a scoundrel and a thief. Meanwhile the less scrupulous publisher can take what he likes, troubling himself not at all about agents and authorizations. These conditions are well enough known in Central Europe and suspected here. The degree of freedom and of thievery may be measured by the attitude of a popular European dramatist who expressed to us his surprise that American producers troubled to buy his work when they could as easily steal it!

The protection of literary property lags behind the protection of other things more directly usable by the multitude. The complete re-establishment of copyright treaties is a first step—and one which American authors can urge upon Congress; after the matter is legally arranged and something like decency in international literary affairs is arrived at, we suggest a careful consideration of the final proposal in Dr Schnitzler's letter:

"I am continually receiving word from America that certain people there claim the right to dispose of my works or even to act

as my general agents, although I have never given them any authority of this sort. Publishers, editors, theatrical managers, but especially I myself have incurred many annoyances and damages from this. And in order that such things may be avoided in the future, I am sending to all people in America who are interested the urgent request that they demand from any one who wants to negotiate with them about any of my works that he exhibit my written authorization bearing specifically on the work in question.

"Such an admonition seems to me all the more pressing, in that the respect for spiritual property, or even merely the right attitude towards it, is as a rule not much developed, either in the public at large or in circles where the interest in art and letters is professional. And further, the existing copyright laws in various countries, not only in America, are by no means adequate for the avoidance of misunderstandings, or even misuse, in this matter. Let us hope the time will come when special laws will no longer be necessary for works of art and literature, and the property of the mind will enjoy the same protection on the part of the state as any other possession. I myself, and many fair-minded people along with me, have reached the point of considering as improper all transactions and oversights which are calculated to limit or cheat one in the profits of his labours; even in those cases which from the legal standpoint are not responsible before the courts and not liable to punishment.

"The problem of copyright laws, which is here touched on in passing, is far too complicated for me to be able, and to dare, to take it up at length in what is intended merely as a personal statement. For the present I shall simply point out that in my opinion this problem could be treated and solved only through international channels; and probably the only hope of interesting parliaments, governments, and the general populace in this subject would be an arrangement whereby a certain fixed percentage of the proceeds arising from the publication of the translated work (whereas up to now the original authors have figured either slightly or not at all in these proceeds) would be managed by some state bureau of control and be turned over to the purposes of charity. The propagandizing of this idea must be left to someone with a gift for organization. I shall be content if my statement is taken up by other publications in your country.

"Faithfully yours,

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER."

THE THEATRE

THE ADDING MACHINE, written by Elmer L. Rice and presented by the Theatre Guild, is, in its first half anyway, absolutely first rate. Though it is in a vein which has already become rather familiar, it brings to its tragic satire of our commercial civilization an energy, an intensity, and a sureness of stroke which we do not often find in this sort of thing. I am not sure that *BABBITT*, *THE HAIRY APE*, or *FROM MORN TO MIDNIGHT*, all of which it touches at some point, achieve the vigour or the accuracy of aim of the first scenes of this play. They are the accuracy and vigour—as well as the cruelty and hardness—of the adding machine itself—of the society of which the adding machine is master. Even the expressionism is used sparingly and efficiently for the purpose of driving home the right effects.

And behind the heavy ax-blade of the author Mr Digges puts a force and precision equal to it. He gives his poor henpecked overworked boob a relentlessly tragic dignity. The difficult scene in the office in which he has to render not only the smarting backfire of his bicker with his fellow clerk, but at the same time the undercurrent of desire and fear which is running in his weary brain; his doglike servility to the boss who has come to lay him off for an adding machine; his dazed return home after the murder and his gentle surrender to the police; and finally the agonizing spectacle of his attempt to justify himself to the jury; were like so many blows stiffly dealt in a war for human dignity and freedom.

But having once made us believe in Mr Zero's dignity, the author proceeds to take it all away from him. Mr Zero ascends to the Elysian Fields only to discover that he is incapable of enjoying them and to learn that he must return to earth and resume his serfdom to eternity. Once a drudge, for ever a drudge. No act of courage can save him.—Now it is obvious that, even apart from the sociological question, there is a strong dramatic objection to such an ending. It seems a mistake to begin a play with revolt and to end it with a dreary subsidence. And in *THE ADDING MACHINE* the climax comes at the beginning. Mr Zero is made to burst from the living coffin of his life with an éclat which commands our sympathy

and then, during the latter half of the evening, we are obliged to see him slowly nailed back into it.

And is this not something more than a dramatic weakness? Is it not a psychological mistake as well? Would even a slave object to Mr Rice's Paradise on the ground that it was not respectable? Surely this is a caricature even of a man like Mr Zero. It is a mistake to suppose that the standardized mechanical lives of our commercial-industrial human beings really represent all the native impulses of the more primitive grades of humanity. They are not strong enough to free themselves, it is true; if they were strong enough, they would do so; they do not even, if you like, want to strongly enough. But it does not follow that, if you substituted for their present state something easier and more agreeable, they would not much prefer it to the other. Respectability is more easily shed than Mr Rice would have us believe. Other instincts lie deeper and stronger. I used to see Mr Zero very often with the American army in France and I know that, confronted with feeblar temptations than Mr Rice has supplied him in Paradise and given freedom of stranger codes, he seldom resigned.

I UNFORTUNATELY missed the first act of SANDRO BOTTICELLI, but from the programme and what I saw afterwards I know it must have been like this:

LEONARDO DA VINCI: What ails our friend Botticelli? He seems silent and distracted to-day—this day of all days, the birthday of Lorenzo the Magnificent, when the people are dancing in the streets like cicadas after rain.

FRA LIPPO LIPPI: They say he is enamoured of Giuliano's mistress, the beautiful Simonetta. But look, here comes Lorenzo himself with Poliziano!

LORENZO DE' MEDICI: Ha, our incomparable Leonardo! How goes the Mona Lisa and what are your latest experiments in engineering?

POLIZIANO: Gentlemen, I must confess it. I have turned another little canzone to Simonetta. *Per bacco*, I cannot find it in my heart to keep away from the subject. (*All laugh.*)

FRA LIPPO LIPPI: No more can our friend Botticelli! (*All laugh.*)

BOTTICELLI (*joining them*): Greeting, good Master Leonardo,

and Your Most Excellent Highness Lord Lorenzo. Is it not a day for men and for angels, for music, for flowers—

LEONARDO: And for lovers? (*All laugh.*)

POLIZIANO: All Florence is laughing to the sun. Come, let us taste some of our host's wine. (*Exeunt omnes—except Botticelli, who hides behind a potted rose-bush to watch Eva Le Gallienne make her entrance.*)

Mr John Murray Anderson's JACK AND JILL has been produced with infinitely pretty costumes and with a tolerably successful attempt to make it exquisite and well-bred. But in spite of all this—and Ann Pennington—it is the old grind of musical comedy. You recognize The Prince of Pilsen and cannot help being bored.

WITH the publication of his volume of essays, *The Flower in Drama*,¹ Mr Stark Young establishes himself as one of the few American minds of any distinction who have devoted themselves to dramatic criticism seriously. His book is full of fine taste and sound judgements, and the only possible objection to it would be that it takes the theatre a little *too* seriously. I feel that Mr Young is often writing about the stage in a style which is not proper to it—the style of the aesthetic criticism of the last century and particularly of Walter Pater. Pater was already sufficiently, himself, an offender in this respect. He had a tendency to write about the setting-up exercises of Sparta as if they were the Duncan dancers, and to translate the even prose of Plato into the literary filigree of the time. But Mr Young has sometimes been known to lavish on the commonplaces of current acting language which Ruskin would surely have thought excessive for the glories of the Renaissance. He has a way of describing even things he thinks indifferent in a sort of mood of antique rapture, and he is in the habit of surrounding his nouns with such prismatic clouds of modifiers that we can scarcely catch a glimpse of them at all. I would warn him—in all admiration—to vent his lyric strain on Tintoretto and to leave us for Ben Ami and Charlie Chaplin his native intelligence and taste.

EDMUND WILSON, JR.

¹ *The Flower in Drama*, by Stark Young (12mo, 162 pages; Scribner: \$1.50).

MODERN ART

JOURNALISTIC criticism, as practised in America at least, obliges a critic to live in a glass house, and none of his processes of arriving at an opinion may be kept secret. A goldfish's lot, to use a simile made popular by one of our wits, is infinitely happier, since the goldfish's thoughts are his own. Not so your daily critic. His half thoughts and quarter thoughts are commanded by the always yawning space to be filled, and in the glare and exposure of shop-window thinking the best he can do generally is to indicate the direction of his thought and not the full force of it. The research necessary for the establishment of exact values in a scattered world being impossible, it follows that justification for a pronounced feeling, when it arrives at all, arrives by accident.

Having changed one of my half thoughts recently into a whole thought, with true goldfish candour I must write it down. It concerns the position of Thomas Eakins. At the time of the memorial exhibition of the work of this artist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1917 I proclaimed in all the publications to which I had access that the hitherto reviled, ignored Thomas Eakins was one of our greatest painters, worthy of a place in our history with Sargent, Whistler, and George Fuller. This seemed sufficiently daring at the time, but now it makes me smile. It was decidedly a half statement. Subconsciously I knew better; but it seemed one way to lead our public, which must be led gently, if it is to be led at all. Now I place Eakins unhesitatingly at the top of our figure painters and my only surprise in the rating of our older men is that Sargent seems so paltry beside him. Just lately the Eakins paintings have been shown again at the Joseph Brummer Galleries in New York, and the agitation in London over the admission of the Wertheimer portraits by Sargent into the National Gallery naturally sent fresh photographs of these works to our newspapers; and the looking at them after all these years and fresh from a contact with the serious art of Eakins, was a distinct shock. They seemed incredibly shallow and frivolous. I knew, of course, even in infancy that Sargent was largely a matter of an agile wrist, but to infants dexterity has its attractions, and I suppose that ever

since I had been seeing the Asher Wertheimer through the rose-coloured glasses of youth and putting things into it it did not possess. It still seems clever to my adult eyes, but gracious heavens, masterpiece of Sargent though it be, it could never be placed next to the John Laurie Wallace or the Cardinal Falconio of Eakins except to its shame. The Cardinal Falconio is undoubtedly one of the great portraits of the world, and even the Young Man that Eakins, who was remorseless in his demand for sittings, must have considered unfinished, is a profoundly human document. Profound is the word for Eakins. He was a pupil of Bonnat and there are traces of the Bonnat teaching in his style, but technique with him was never anything more than a stepping stone to the things of the soul. The innermost depths of the sitter were sounded before he let go, but at the same time, as there was absolutely no trace of side in the work, the essential result had a quiet reasonableness that passes, naturally enough, above the heads of the thoughtless. Looking again at these pictures in the Brummer Gallery it occurred to me amusedly that after all it is no wonder that we know nothing of the real life of Shakespeare. Work intensely true to its period must seem too natural to be astonishing, and without the sense of shock what can put a personality before the public distinctly? It is silly to blame the critics of the 'eighties and 'nineties, therefore, or even the wealthy collectors who preferred Bouguereau and Cabanel to Eakins. We may be quite sure, as Samuel Butler exasperatingly points out, that though we have at last caught up with Eakins we are just as heartily crushing some living "Flower beneath the Foot" (Marin, Weber, Man Ray, perhaps?) as ever our predecessors did.

It is however permissible to laugh gently at our museum directors in this regard. It always seems possible to laugh at museum directors though, to do the poor dears justice, everyone knows that the real trouble comes from the stupid committee-men who stand behind the director and hamper his every turn. These men are supposedly "conservative," but that is only one way of saying they are incapable of ideas. By the time these conservative ignoramuses are educated, bullied, or swayed by fashion into a receptive mood, the real opportunity for constructive work has always passed. In the case of Eakins, all of these directors knew ten years ago that any of his pictures could be obtained for almost nothing, but it

never occurred to them then that the things had merit. The memorial show of 1917 startled them into a degree of activity, but already someone had raised the Eakins prices above the former bargain rates. It produced a hesitation in official circles that later resolved into complete inaction, when the pictures were hidden away from public view and quietude descended upon them. The Brummer resurrection has of course brought the matter forward, and as always happens with the real thing, the impetus towards justice is stronger with each recurring discussion. Again the directors seem accused by fate. But what happens? The Eakins prices rise again. One must now pay eight thousand dollars for some of them. Is it not amusing? And as pretty an argument as any one need wish for the establishment of a local Luxembourg which shall have an interest in contemporary art?

HENRY McBRIDE

MUSICAL CHRONICLE

CYRIL SCOTT is a Parnassian when he is most strong. His sonata for piano and his piano concerto are, both, opulent and marmoreal. Their beauty is a beauty of pomp and slow proud gesture and oratund period taken musical shape. Fire and sheet-ice combine in them; surface fire of enthusiastic sweep and crashing ecstatic summit and Handelian state overlying the profound impersonality and chill of the poet turned away from the existing fact into regions of grandiose and indifferent and solitary dreaming. They are *Übermenschenmusik*, like some of Szymanowski's and Scriabine's orchestral compositions; arrogant and voluptuous and flauntful; rhythms of runners stepping through the skies far over human heads; visions of the glory of the creative life; visions profoundly uninformed of the depths of the heart and of suffering and brotherliness and man. A marble being made them, too, and what they utter is eloquent of some cold and sumptuous palace of art where rags and sores and muddled feet never penetrate, and the heaped treasures of the world are used to procure in life's despite a perpetual dalliance. They have their kin in the actions and dreams of a generation of gods and impotents: Louis II building Versailles on the Chiemsee and Neuschwanstein in the lonely heart of the mountains; d'Annunzio cradling himself with visions of a Pentelican temple on the shores of Como dedicate everlastingly to his own dramatic art; Stefan George upholding in solemn verse before a yellow curtain an hieratic and glorified image of himself. A trifle belated, these English scores arrive and assume their place by the side of much old-fashioned grandeur.

And they have beauty, even though it is a beauty circumscribed and shut off from the electric reaches of to-day. The stuff of them is rich and good. The treatment is somewhat too stiff and too ornate to satisfy us quite; too much velvet and too much gold have been applied; and we prefer barer and simpler rooms, and Mousorgsky and his courage to stand pain. And still, the material excites us with its native amplitude and density. Scott is one of the creatures born to musicianship; he has it in his blood. Many living musicians are more respectable and vital artists than he.

Nevertheless, his Sunday-childhood sets him among the rare few. What he has in his fingers cannot be obtained with will. It falls from the gods; and, despite his languor and poor-heartedness, remains in the touch of its host as felicity and glamour and magic. Music comes from this man, wan and languid, it is true, but molten and relaxed in its flow. It is born out of the cool stony beauty of the piano-sound. The ideas are just fallen right, right in the register, right in their harmonic vesture. Song begins tender and magical in him; auditory sensations are caught. Delicate washes of beauty, glintings of rich novel harmonies, brilliant orchestral hues, appear as though shaken out of a sorcerer's bag. Scott's harmonic progressions thrill mid the flamboyant forms; fill with their power and subtlety. He is among the original modern harmonists; sometimes acrid and pricking and sadistic; oftener, juicy and gorgeous. The colour is always rich, whether colour of harmony or of instrument. There is a fine cloudy sonority in the middle movement of the concerto, with its noble bell-tones; and the last movement rings bright with the well-disposed sounds of celesta, campanella, harp, and piano. At moments, power cries out of these works. Page upon page of the piano sonata, the opening theme, and passage precedent to its return, the *staccato* triplet passage toward the close of the second movement, proves him capable of not only the dreamful, tender lyrical movements, but of the large aggressive exuberant ones as well. The final fugue is masterly, almost; piles rock on rock in its racing ascent.

Unfortunately, it is a dishevelled beauty that comes to us in Scott; in the very best of his compositions. It does not even fill out the sphere to which it is limited. Between the magnificent stuffs there are holes. The satins and velvets and gilding are strewn about disorderly, and do not play properly against each other. Scott's thematic invention is unequal; his critical sense uncertain. The sonata for piano, the very best of his works, shows how weak they are. The themes of the first movement are satisfactory and well contrasted; the heroic first motif plays against the languorous second, grandiloquence and fire against the dreamful and wayward flute. But in the second movement, the composer becomes the sentimental Englishman, pompous and episcopal; and the Englishman never becomes sentimental, but he empties the suddy-pail entire, to the last soapy drop. Later, Scott simpers, "vesperal," with Mac-

Dowell; and the fugue has to erect its ladder to hardier regions midmost a pool of melted sundaes.

More responsible for the disarray is the absence of the formal sense. Both sonata and concerto are without genuine organization. Clangorous and opulent and sensitive as the music is, crammed with rich lyrical substance, with pearly and opalescent colour, it wants base. It has no situation in space; no points of departure and rest and conclusion. It is like an array of large unanchored fragments; pieces and progressions of sound which start out bravely enough, but complete no curve. Little that Scott touches and that quivers a minute in his hand, is maintained. The pulsing lyrical fragments rarely build out, continue and engender each other. The earth, presses a brief instant, fades; and we float limp in space. Each fresh idea is always something of a new commencement. The middle movement of the concerto is curiously indeterminate, ends up in air. The finale is somewhat like a railroad train which starts to circle the globe, but being too rigid to conform to the curvature of the earth's surface, quits the ground and loses itself in the chill regions of interstellar space. The concluding measures of the work, the recapitulation of the opening Handelian chords, taste arbitrary and not satisfying. While the first movement of the sonata hangs together, the second goes quite to pieces. The pages which precede the fugue are both lone wandering and being lost; an impasse of sound; endless repetitions of indeterminate phrases. And, as in the concerto, the rapid, acrid, brilliant finale does not really come to a result. The peroration, noble and exciting as it is, seems, here too, an arbitrarily harnessed coda.

And these are the strongest of Scott's work! About them, leviathans of the lake, there swims a school of smaller pieces, lesser in form and life. There are effective works among these, too: The Jungle, Dance of the Elephants, for instance. But the greater number of them are wan and near vapid, leaving us with a sense of malaise and restlessness and unsatisfaction. Many of Scott's songs deserve to go by the name of the Irish tune which he has used as theme in one of his passacaglias—Famine Song. In most of these almost tediously yearnful and dreamy and effeminate pieces, the Parnassian, proud and clangorous, writes as though he were a sixteen-year-old schoolboy enduring his first attack of *Weltschmerz*. There are three poems of Stefan George dedicated to Cyril Scott,

and entitled *Der Knabe, Der Mir von Herbst und Abend Sang*; and to-day, years since the composition of the poem, Scott seems still the lad in the voluptuous glooms of puberty yearning beneath painted windows. He pours himself out in banal sentiments and pallid rhetoric; is weak and loose at once. Sometimes he rocks his own cradle in *Lotus Land*. In less sensual moods, he wanders plucking posies in the *Garden of Soul Sympathy*. He is still a good year this side *Children of Adam* and *Song of Myself*.

Imagination is wanting Scott; for that reason his very major works retain the general character of brilliant improvisations. His gift has remained an almost purely physical thing. He is a slave, it appears, of his two hands. What they, wandering over the keyboard, find for him, and not what his mind shadows forth, is determinate for his work. He cannot project a rhythm away from himself, outside his body; cannot conceive a work in such a fashion that it has a shape its own, iron and immutable. Form, after all, is the product of the marriage of a rhythm projected by the brain well before the process of incarnation is begun, and of a steady and unflagging improvisation lying in the curve projected by the brain. And Scott, incapable of imagination, of objectification, has, it seems, to permit one phrase to suggest another, and to construct his works in fairly haphazard fashion. Magnificent flights do appear. But the inner form is vague. And sentimentality, child of unimaginativeness, beacons ever.

And, when once a figure manages to establish itself in his work, it has the tendency instead of flowing and generating complementary figures, to become obsessive. The two *passacaglias* for orchestra seem born of such rigidity. They have the "hammering monotony" of a single figure repeated over and over with exasperating unvariedness. In them, the *basso ostinato* of *The Jungle*, effective enough in the piano composition, has a counterpart almost maddeningly regular. The form of the *passacaglia*, one supposes, demanded something other; demanded a steady variation of theme and deformation of rhythm. Now, Scott has indeed varied the orchestral dress of the tunes, the *Irish Famine Song* and the *Poor Irish Boy* upon which he has based the *passacaglias*. He has lavished the colours of the grand orchestra upon them, particularly those of the instruments of percussion. The pianoforte is brilliantly introduced in the second. But the monotony persists, despite the steady aug-

mentations of volume which brings both compositions to resonant conclusions. And at the end, they remind one unpleasantly of the rigid repetitions of catatonic gestures.

In the effort to correct this imaginative poverty and invertebracy, Scott has had recourse to mechanical expedients. He has attempted to create a great irregularity of beat in his work; to contrast five fourths with four fourths and seven eighths with five eighths and eleven sixteenths with nine sixteenths, and so forth. But the result, as in all instances of mental protestations against imaginative impotence, is thoroughly unhappy. There is no real justification for the continual changes of time in which Scott indulges. The shifts are not invariably justified by the musical phrases. Often, the irregular bars reveal themselves as perfectly arbitrary; purely wilful extensions of regular ones. Hence, they defeat their own purpose. Intended to lift the music out of the rhythmical ruts into which it has the tendency to fall, they create a sort of monotony of their own. For they are not necessary. But, so it seems, Scott harbours a theory to the effect that there is a need for these changes; and finds a sort of occupation for his unrooted mind by acting upon it. And, as usual, the over-determined act is quite as truly expressive of the inner condition as the one it is calculated to correct.

(After the second Ornstein recital; the New Gallery; March 6th.)

PAUL ROSENFELD

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